

A
S Y S T E M

O F

Divinity and Morality;

Containing a

SERIES of DISCOURSES

On the principal and most important Points of

Natural and Revealed Religion.

Compiled from the Works of the most eminent
Divines of the Church of *ENGLAND*.

V O L. II.

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SYSTEM

OF

KNOWLEDGE AND REVELATION

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VOLUME II

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DISCOURSE XXV. Abp. Synges.

The Terms of Salvation, are Faith, Obedience, and Repentance.

John 13. 17.

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

ALL that God requires in order to our everlasting happiness, is to believe what he has made known; to live according to the rules and laws, which he has given us; and when we have broken any of them, to confess it with true sorrow to God, humbly to beg his pardon and forgiveness, and carefully endeavour to serve him better for the future. These three things, which are commonly called, *faith, obedience, and repentance*, contain the sum and substance of the christian religion, and are the terms of our salvation: and,

First, The things made known by God, to be believed by us, are,——that there is a God, who made the heavens, the earth, and all things therein. That God is not a body like unto us, but is a spirit, eternal, most holy, just and true, gracious and merciful: that he knows and can do all things, and is every where present: that tho' there cannot be more than one God, yet in the divine nature, there are three distinct persons mentioned in scripture, to each of whom the name and attributes of God are frequently ascribed: the first is called the *Father*, the second the *Son* or *Word*, the third the *Holy-Ghost* or *Spirit*. This we call the doctrine of the holy *trinity*; which is to be believed, because God has revealed it, but not to be pried into, because we cannot comprehend it. Here we see thro' a

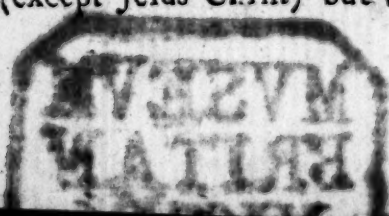
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glafs darkly, but when we get to heaven, we ſhall ſee face to face, and know even as alſo we are known,
 1 Cor. 13. 12. To the Father, the holy ſcriptures do more immediately aſcribe the work of creating the world by his almighty power, and of ordering and governing it by his good providence. As to the Son or word, we are to believe, that he came down from heaven, and for our ſake, took the nature of man upon him, being like us in all things, ſin only excepted.—That he was conceived by the power of God's Holy Spirit, in the womb of a pure virgin, and born of her; ſo that he was God and man in one perſon, and called Jeſus Chriſt; and after he had lived a moſt pure, unſpotted life, he was falſly accuſed by the *Jews*, before *Pontius Pilate*, the *Roman* governor; and put to the painful death of the croſs; and that his death might more fully appear, a ſpear was thruſt into his ſide, when on the croſs; and after his body was taken down, it was laid in a ſepulchre, where it continued without life, until the third day, when he roſe from the dead.

And here it will be proper to obſerve, that *Adam* and *Eve*, from whom all mankind are deſcended, ſoon after they were created, did highly offend almighty God, in eating of the fruit of the tree, which he had ſtrictly forbidden them to eat, under the threatening of a very great puniſhment. By means of this ſin, their nature became weakened, corrupted, and much inclined to wickedneſs; and as theſe two perſons were the common parents of all mankind, by ſuch offence they alſo communicated an univerſal corruption of nature to all their poſterity; ſo that all mankind has ever ſince been naturally inclined to do evil, and averſe to do good; which corruption of our nature, is by ſome called *original ſin*. And beſides this *original ſin*, there is no man (except Jeſus Chriſt) but what has committed



mitted many actual sins and transgressions, both which render us incapable of eternal happiness, and expose us to God's wrath, and that eternal punishment he has prepared for sinners.

But notwithstanding all mankind, ever since the sin of their first parents, were in this sad and wretched condition, yet God in his infinite mercy, was pleased again to admit us all into a capacity of being restored to his favour, and to that eternal happiness in the next world, of which our original and actual sins had deprived us. To this end, he sent his son into the world, to take our nature upon him, and to become our redeemer: God accepting his sufferings and death, as a sacrifice and propitiation for the sins of the whole world; and for the sake of which he has been pleased to promise pardon and acceptance to all those, who shall embrace the true faith, sincerely repent of their former sins, and carefully observe the laws and commandments of God. And what Christ has thus done for us, is called the work of our redemption.

We are further taught to believe, that Jesus Christ, upon the third day after his death, rose again to life, appeared to his apostles, and many of his disciples, was seen and handled by them, and eat, drank, and conversed with them, for the space of forty days, (thereby to prove the reality of his resurrection) after which in the sight of multitudes, he was taken up, and ascended into heaven, where he remains in the highest glory, *sitting at the right hand of God*, for ever to make intercession with God, for us.

We are also to believe, that soon after Christ's ascension, the *Holy Ghost*, or *Spirit*, the third person of the trinity, did in a wonderful manner descend upon the apostles and disciples of Christ, to enlighten their minds, that they might understand the holy scriptures, and know God's will; enduing

them with gifts and abilities to teach, and preach the gospel, with truth and power; enabling them to speak all sorts of languages; that they might instruct the several nations, and people of the world; and giving them power to work miracles, for the confirmation of what they taught and preached. And tho' the ministers and preachers of the gospel, are not now endowed with the same miraculous gifts, and abilities, as the apostles were, yet where any one of these uses his best endeavours with sincerity and diligence, to improve his understanding, and encrease his knowledge, in things relating to God and religion; the Holy Spirit will not be wanting to assist the pious and honest endeavours of such a man, and enable him to grow and increase in the knowledge of what is necessary to the salvation of himself and others. And since we are by nature inclined to evil, and of ourselves unable to do any good, the Holy Spirit does also move and work upon our consciences, our wills and affections, in order to incline and assist us to the constant practice of what God requires from us: and thus the Holy Spirit is the immediate author and worker of those gifts and graces within us, which are necessary for the edification, instruction, and sanctification, of all christian people.

And all such, who by the preaching of the gospel, and the motions of the Holy Spirit, have embraced the true faith, and been also baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are called the church of Christ: and as a king is the head of his kingdom, so is Christ the king and head of his church, which is but *one*; and in the communion or fellowship of which, all *saints*, that is, all good christians, are for ever joined and united, to partake in common the privileges and advantages which God has promised to that society; and Christ Jesus hath called all nations and people into his church,
offering

Disc. XXV. *are faith, obedience, &c.* 5

offering the same benefits and privileges, and in as ample a manner to the *Gentiles* as to the *Jews*; and accepting of true faith, repentance, and obedience, from all persons, in all parts of the world; for which reason the church is called *catholic* or universal.

As there is a mutual covenant and agreement made between husband and wife, master and servant, king and people; so there is a covenant made between God, in and thro' Jesus Christ, and the Church: every member of which promises and engages to perform those things which God requires, in order to salvation, and these are faith, obedience, and repentance; and God on his part promises, for the sake of Jesus Christ, that he will give the grace of his Holy Spirit, to assist our endeavours, and will pardon the sins of all who truly repent. And tho' when we die, our bodies will return to earth, and our souls to God who gave them; yet when this world shall have an end, Jesus Christ will then come to judge all mankind; and then the bodies of all men shall be raised and united to their souls, and those who have lived wickedly, and die impenitently, shall be condemned to eternal torments; but they who have sincerely performed what God required of them, shall be rewarded with everlasting happiness, in the kingdom of heaven. Having thus shewn you what things God has made known to us, in order to our belief, it may be proper next to consider, what grounds and assurance we have to believe them.

And some of these things are to be believed, because we are assured of them by our own reason. For instance; our reason informs us, that the world was made by almighty God, because we see so much order, beauty, and usefulness in every part; that God is eternal, most wise, good, just, powerful and perfect, because he is the first cause of all things;

that good men shall be rewarded, and wicked men punished in the next world, because God is good and just, wise and powerful. These things not only our reason teaches us to receive and believe, but they are also revealed to us, in the holy scriptures; and which we ought to give credit to, because the doctrine contained in that part of it, called the New Testament, was not only confirmed by the miracles and wonderful works, but also by the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and his apostles, and many of his disciples; and the authority of the old testament may be proved by the testimony which the new testament gives of its truth, assuring us that both were written by holy men, inspired by the spirit of God. And tho' this holy book was originally written in languages, not now understood by common people, yet God in his providence having raised up many good and learned men, not only to keep and preserve, but also to translate and explain every part of the holy scriptures; we may rest assured, that if the unlearned will diligently hear and read them in the languages they do understand, and carefully follow such instruction, as is afforded them, both by the preaching and writings of men set apart for that purpose, that God will undoubtedly accept of this; because they comply with all that is in their power to do, and more will not in reason be required from them.

But should any say, that some of those things, which the holy scriptures propose to be believed, are above our capacity, and as we cannot understand them, so we ought not to give our assent to them; my answer is, that would any man persuade me to believe a thing, plainly contrary to sense and reason, pretending it to be revealed by God, I should immediately refuse to yield my assent, because I am sure that God, who is all goodness and wisdom, will never require his creatures to believe things that are absurd; such as that bitter is sweet,

or sweet bitter ; that darkness and light are both alike ; that what we see, feel and taste to be bread, is a human body ; or that one and the same body can be at many distant places at one time. God will never require us to believe such absurdities and contradictions as these, which we therefore ought to reject, as soon as we hear them named. But as for such things, as are only dark and obscure, but not absurd, nor contrary to our understandings, however they may be above it ; if God thinks fit to declare to us such as these, we ought to give credit to them upon his authority. A man born blind believes there is such a thing as light, tho' he knows not what it is, because he is told so ; and if the holy scriptures assure us, that there are three persons in the unity of the divine nature, and that the divine and human nature are united in Christ, why ought we not to assent to this, tho' we know not how it is ? Thus much concerning *faith*. I proceed to consider the

Second thing God requires of us, which is *obedience* to his laws. The laws of *God* are partly discovered to to us by our reason, and more fully by the holy scriptures. The chief and fundamental laws of God, under which all the rest may be comprehended, are the ten commandments ; and for the more easily taking a view of these, and all the other laws of God, some divide them into three parts ; the first containing our duty to God, the second every man's duty to himself, and the third our duty towards our neighbour.

The great parts or branches of our duty to God, are to believe what he has revealed ; to acknowledge the justice and equity of what he commands or threatens. To hope for the performance of all his promises, upon the terms and conditions he offers ; neither presuming on God's mercy, if we continue in our sins, nor despairing of his goodness and fa-

vour towards us, if we repent and amend our lives. To love God above all things, because he is a being of the greatest excellency and perfection, most good and gracious; and to manifest our love towards him, by endeavouring to please and enjoy him all we can in this life, by prayer and meditation, and to prepare ourselves to be for ever happy with him in heaven. To fear God above all things, because he is most just and powerful, and who will certainly punish us for our sins, unless we repent of them. To put our trust in God in all danger and distress, being assured that if we serve him faithfully, he will enable us by his grace to resist temptations, and perform our duty; and will also deliver us from the troubles and afflictions of this world, or give us strength and patience to bear them, and make them a means of bringing us to eternal happiness. To humble ourselves before God, submitting to his holy will in all things, cheerfully obeying whatever he commands, and patiently suffering whatever, in the course of his providence, he shall please to inflict upon us. To honour God, by inwardly acknowledging his infinite greatness and goodness, and outwardly expressing this honour to him, by coming to his place of worship, and behaving there with all seriousness, gravity and decency; by paying due respect to his ministers, for the sake of their function; by keeping the lord's day holy, in doing acts of piety and charity, reading, hearing, and meditating upon his holy word; giving due attendance to the ordinances he has appointed, such as preaching, baptism, and the holy communion; remembering often the vow we made at baptism, and preparing ourselves by prayer, meditation, examination and repentance, to eat of that bread and drink of that cup, which Christ ordained to be a remembrance of his death and sufferings. We must also be careful not to mention
God's

God's holy name, but with great seriousness and reverence; and to abstain from all vain, profane, and false swearing, cursing and blasphemy. We must worship God both publicly and privately, praise him for his goodness and mercy, thank him for all his blessings spiritual and temporal, pray to him for all things necessary for our souls and bodies, confess our sins, and beg God's pardon for them, and offer up these our devotions, in the name and thro' the mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer. But we must neither love nor fear, honour nor worship, trust in or pray to any saint, angel, or image, whether in heaven or upon earth; for God is a jealous God, and will not bear any rival or competitor. These are the main branches and fundamental parts of our duty to God.

And as to what concerns the duty of every man towards himself, that may be reduced to these particulars; namely, to be humble in our thoughts, considering what frail and infirm creatures we are; to refer the glory of all our good actions to God, the author of them; to be meek in our temper and behaviour, not to suffer anger or passion to make us act unbecoming a christian; to reflect frequently on our state and condition, as to this and the next world, and study to avoid all temptations to sin; to be patient and contented both in sickness and health, in adversity and prosperity; not to murmur or repine at any evil that befalls us, nor to envy those who are in a better condition; but always to submit to God's providence, to improve ourselves in the knowledge of religion, and the practice of virtue; to be modest and chaste in our thoughts, words and actions, avoiding all lust, uncleanness and immodest discourse; to be moderate in eating, sober and temperate in drinking, not wasting time in sleep, idleness, or unseasonable recreations; but always mak-

ing such good use of God's creatures, and these liberties he has allowed us, as may tend most to his glory, the good of others, the health and welfare both of our souls and bodies.

With respect to the duty we owe to our neighbours ; we are obliged to love all men, whether rich or poor, friends, strangers, or enemies ; and to express this love by praying for their welfare, endeavouring to prevent their hurt, and promote their good, as we have ability and opportunity ; and so to do unto others, as we should expect and desire, they should do to us, were we in their case and condition. We must not take away nor detain from any man, what is his right and property ; but render to him whatever by the laws of God, or man, or by any lawful promise or agreement is fairly due to him. — The life of no man must be taken away, but by the lawful authority of the magistrate, or in self-defence ; nor must his body be hurt, or his good name injured, by raising false reports concerning him, or publishing his faults and failings ; but we must be ready, as we have opportunity, to preserve the life, health and good name, as also the goods and estate of our neighbour, when in danger, by any accident or malicious designs of others. — We must not tempt, allure, or encourage by our example, other men to sin, but prudently admonish, advise, and exhort them for their souls good : nor should we deceive any man by false or equivocating speeches, or breach of our promises ; but we must be true, faithful and sincere in all our conversation and dealings with men. — Those who are poor, in distress or affliction, we ought to relieve, help and comfort, to the utmost of our power. — They who err in matters of religion, are to be argued with in the mildest and most gentle manner ; nor should any anger, railing or reviling, be used against the greatest heretics or schismatics ; nor yet any man be per-

persecuted or punished by the civil power, for matters of doctrine, if he be peaceable, and does not attempt to teach any thing that tends to disturb the state, or debauch the morals of the people. — If a private enemy assaults or endeavours to injure any man in his person, goods, or reputation, it is lawful for such person to stand up in his own defence, as far as the justice of his case requires. But when we have done all that is necessary for the preservation of ourselves or the public, we must not proceed further, out of hatred or malice, to hurt even our greatest and most implacable enemies; but must be ready to do them all manner of good, consistent with our own safety, and the duty we owe to others.

Husbands must love their wives with a most tender affection, and give all the proofs they can of it, in their actions. Wives must be obedient to their husbands, and both must be strictly just and faithful to each other. Parents must honestly endeavour to provide for their children, and bring them up in the fear of God, countenancing and encouraging them in every thing that is good, reprovng and correcting them, but without passion, when they do what is evil. Masters and mistresses must be just and merciful to their servants; and servants must behave themselves with faithfulness and diligence, obedience and respect towards their masters and mistresses. The pastors and ministers of God's word must be exemplary in their lives, diligent in teaching and preaching of sound doctrine, and administering the ordinances of God; and the people must respect their pastors for their work's sake, giving constant attendance to all holy offices, and carefully practising all such directions and instructions as they shall receive. Magistrates and rulers must govern the people subject to them, according to the laws and constitutions of the land, admini-

string justice with diligence and dispatch, without fear, favour or affection to any one ; tempering the rigor and severity of human laws, with all that equity, moderation and mercy, that is consistent with the laws of God and the public good ; and the people must behave towards their rulers, with honour and reverence to their persons, submission and obedience to their lawful authority, in all things not contrary to God's law. I come now to the

Third and last thing God requires from us, which is *repentance*. When a man has transgressed any of God's laws, and thereby made himself liable to God's wrath and eternal punishment ; the first step he must take, in order to repentance and reconciliation with God, is to be truly sorrowful for his sins, and for having provoked so good and gracious, so just and powerful a being. But the truth of this sorrow must shew itself by such a due sense of our sins, as to be moved thereby to forsake and amend them, for such only can be said to be truly sorrowful for them. In the next place, this sorrow for sin must move the sinner to make an humble acknowledgment and confession of them to God ; and the better to perform this, he should often examine his own conscience, and bring his sins to remembrance : and when he confesses his sins, he must also heartily beg God's pardon for them, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who died for us ; he must seriously and stedfastly resolve to amend them, and lead a better life for the future. And if he has wronged any man in word or deed, he must make reparation and restitution, to the best of his power. But he must strictly keep and fulfil these resolutions, or all the rest will signify nothing. For reformation and amendment of life, is the only thing that compleats the true nature of repentance. And thus I have given a brief and plain account of all that God requires of us, as necessary to salvation. All that

remains is to make some useful inferences from what has been said.

And, 1st. we may be assured, * that an empty profession of the christian religion, how specious soever it be, will by no means avail to bring us to heaven, unless accompanied with the fruits of obedience and a holy life. No profession of faith in Christ, no subjection to him, will be sufficient without *that*. For, tho' we are baptized in his name, and call ourselves his disciples and followers, tho' we profess all the articles of the christian faith, and perform all the external parts and duties of religion; tho' we constantly go to church, and frequent the service of God, join in public prayers with great appearance of devotion, hear his word and receive the blessed sacrament with reverence, love and gratitude to our dear redeemer: yet if all this time we have not obeyed the laws of God, and kept his commandments, none of these things will bring us to heaven, or be sufficient, to obtain that salvation which he hath purchased for mankind.

2. The consideration of what has been observed, should engage us to make the most thankful acknowledgments to the author of our salvation, for what he hath done for us. And there is abundant reason for our thankfulness, if we consider the greatness of the benefit conferred, the way and manner in which it was purchased, the easy and reasonable terms on which it may be obtained. The benefit conferred is no less than eternal salvation, which comprehends all the blessings and mercies of the gospel, the means to obtain our happiness, and the way to it, by *saving us from our sins*: from the guilt of them by our justification in the blood of Christ; from the power and dominion of them, by the sanctifying grace and virtue of the Holy Ghost. It comprehends our deliverance from hell and the wrath to come, and the

* Tillotson.

the bestowing upon us a great and lasting happiness; large as our wishes, and immortal as our souls. Eternal salvation includes all this. And this benefit was purchased and procured for us, in a way of infinite kindness and condescension, by the humiliation and bitter sufferings of the Son of God; who not only took upon him the form of a servant, and the person of a sinner, but became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. A punishment the most cruel and ignominious! The son of God came down from heaven, from the most exalted state of glory and happiness, into this world, a vale of tears, a sink of sin and misery; and was content to suffer death, that he might save us from eternal ruin, raise us to glory and honour, to the greatest happiness our nature is capable of. And the easy, reasonable terms, on which salvation may be obtained, is another argument for thankfulness. And that is, by a constant, sincere and universal obedience to the laws of God; which supposeth repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as the root and principle of all the virtues of a good life. God, in giving us laws, hath imposed nothing on us, but what is reasonable, fit and good, and in its nature necessary to make us capable of that happiness he hath promised. For what is more gracious than to promise us eternal felicity, for doing here what is really best and most for our advantage.

3. Here is abundant encouragement given to our obedience. We have the divine assistance promised to enable us to perform the most difficult parts of our duty; the holy spirit of God to help our infirmities, to excite us to what is good, and to strengthen us in the doing it: so that notwithstanding our manifold failings and imperfections, we are certainly assured of God's accepting our sincere endeavours to obey his will for the sake of the
righteous-

righteousness, obedience and meritorious sufferings of our blessed Saviour.

Lastly, the consideration of what has been said should check the presumption of those, who with so much confidence rely upon Christ for salvation, without taking any care to keep his commandments; as if salvation was what he knew not how to dispose of. No; he came to *save us from our sins, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* So that the salvation he hath purchased, necessarily implies the forsaking of our sins, and amending of our lives; for Christ's death and sufferings are not more an argument of God's great love to mankind, than they are a demonstration of his perfect hatred of sin. If then we continue in the love and practice of sin, we defeat the whole design of our Saviour's coming into the world; and the redemption, which by his death he has purchased, will not, in the least, avail us.

DISCOURSE XXVI. *Abp. Sharpe.*

The great benefits of our salvation by Christ
represented and applied.

Mat. I. 21.

*And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall
save his people from their sins.*

Salvation imports in general some great deliverance from any evil or danger; thus God's conducting the *Israelites* thro' the *Red Sea* and delivering them out of the hands of the *Philistines*, is called a great salvation. But salvation, by way of eminence, is applied to that wonderful deliverance, which our blessed Saviour procured for mankind, by saving them from the punishment of their sins; and in the new testament is the same as our redemption by Christ. This is that salvation, referred to by *St. Paul*, *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation* *? Indeed it also signifies the doctrine or gospel of Christ, which tenders this salvation to mankind. From these words, I shall consider the great benefits and blessings contained in this salvation, and the many encouragements we have given us, to endeavour to obtain it.

The salvation which Christ purchased, and the gospel tenders to every creature, is a comprehension of the greatest blessings God can bestow; a deliverance from the most dreadful evils, that mankind can suffer. It contains all that can make the nature of man perfect, or his life happy; and secures him from whatever can render his condition miserable.

* *Heb. 2. 3.*

able. The blessings of it are inexpressible, and beyond imagination. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him* ||.

For, to be saved, as Christ came to save the world, is to have all our innumerable sins and transgressions forgiven and blotted out; all those heavy loads of guilt, which oppressed our souls, perfectly removed from our minds. It is to be reconciled to God, and restored to his favour; so that he will be no longer an angry, terrible and revengeful God; but a most kind, compassionate, and tender hearted father. It is to be at peace with him, and with our consciences; to have a title to his peculiar love, care and protection, all our days; to be rescued from the bondage and dominion of sin, and the tyranny of the devil. It is to be translated from the power of darkness, into the kingdom of our dear Lord; *so that sin shall reign no longer in our mortal bodies, but we shall serve God in newness of spirit*. It is to be placed in a state of true freedom and liberty, to be no longer under the controul of blind passions, and hurried on by our impetuous lusts, to do what our reason condemns. It is to have a new principle of life infused in our souls, whereby we shall be enabled to live up to the perfection of our nature, and in some degree partake of the divine. It is to have the holy spirit lodged in our hearts, whose comfortable influence will ever cheer and refresh us; and by whose wise counsels we shall be always advised, directed and governed. It is to be transformed into the image of God; to be like him in wisdom, righteousness, and all other perfections, of which man's nature is capable. Again,

To be saved as Christ came to save mankind, is to be delivered from the wrath to come, and from that dreadful vengeance which shall be one day inflicted

flitted on the whole world ; ' when the heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be burnt up with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up †. When the Lord shall descend from heaven with a mighty shout, with ten thousand of his angels, to take vengeance in flaming fire, upon all ungodly men, for all their ungodly deeds that they have committed * ; when all men, both small and great, dead and living, shall be summoned to appear before his dreadful and impartial tribunal, to give an account of all their actions. When the greatest and most prosperous sinners shall tremble and be confounded ; when they ' shall hide themselves in the dens, and rocks of the mountains ; saying to the mountains and rocks fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb ‡, whose salvation they have despised, from this dreadful day of wrath, and those amazing terrors that attend it, doth Christ's salvation, and that only, set us free. But further yet.

To be saved, as Christ came to save the world, is to be translated after this life is ended, into a state of eternal felicity ; never more to die or suffer the uneasiness and infirmities of an earthly body ; never more to know pain and sickness, grief and sorrow, labour and weariness, disquiet or vexation : But to live in perfect ease and peace, freedom and liberty ; and to enjoy ourselves and the greatest good, after the most perfect manner for evermore. It is to have our bodies, that sleep in the dust, raised again and re-united to our souls ; and to be no longer gross, earthly, corruptible bodies, but spiritual, heavenly, immortal ones ; fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, in which he now sits at the right hand of God.

† 2 Pet. 3. 10.

* 1 Thes. 4. 16. Jude 15.

‡ Rev. 6. 15. 16.

God. It is to live in the city of the great king, the heavenly *Jerusalem*, where the glory of the Lord fills the place with perpetual light and bliss. It is to spend an eternity in the most noble and agreeable employments; in viewing and contemplating the wonderful works of God, admiring the wisdom of his providence, adoring his infinite love to the sons of men, reflecting on our own inexpressible happiness, and singing everlasting hymns of praise, joy and triumph to God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, for vouchsafing all these blessings. It is to dwell for ever in a place, where no objects of pity or compassion, of anger or envy, of hatred or distrust, are to be found; but where all will increase the happiness of each other, by mutual love and kindness. It is to converse with the most delightful company, to be restored to the society of our dear friends and relations, who died in the faith of Christ. Lastly, it is to be with Jesus Christ, to behold his glory, to live for ever in seeing and enjoying the great God, in whose *presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore*. This is the salvation that Christ hath purchased for us; this the salvation his gospel offers to all mankind. And have we not great reason to say with the apostle, *how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!*

For let us suppose a person convicted of notorious crimes, and sentenced to death, and that thro' the powerful intercession of the prince with his father, this condemned malefactor was not only offered a pardon, but to be preferred and have his sovereign's favour; and yet so obstinate is he, as perversely to reject these kind overtures, and to chuse rather to die miserably than live happily. Would not this be a most unaccountable madness? and who would pity one, so stupid and foolish, as to act thus against sense and reason? and yet this is
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the case of most men ; for by reason of our manifold offences against heaven, we are in a worse condition, than this supposed condemned malefactor : since his punishment is only temporal death ; but death eternal with all the dreadful consequences of it, are the deserved wages, the just recompence of our transgressions. But so infinitely kind is God to us, that thro' the mediation of his son Jesus, he will not take advantage of our weakness, but offers us a pardon for all our sins, and his love and favour, which is better than life itself. He offers to make us children of the most high, and heirs of an eternal kingdom, of a crown of glory that fadeth not away. And is it not the utmost stupidity, for us not to embrace these gracious tenders ; but to be so in love with sin and misery, as to despise the bliss and happiness of heaven ? How amazing is it, that God who is so rich in mercy, so abundant in love, as to offer the inestimable treasures of his grace and favour to every human creature, and yet that most of us should be so wretchedly foolish, as to slight and disregard them ? That the painted bubbles of this present world, should so captivate and allure us, as to make us undervalue those sublime glories, that are of eternal duration. O the base and degenerate spirits of mankind ! that they should patiently become slaves and vassals to diverse lusts, rather than enjoy the most glorious *liberty of the sons of God*. That they should spend their days in vanity and emptiness, folly and misery, fanciful satisfactions and real sorrows, and at last find nothing but anguish, misery and confusion forever ; when they might live happily in this life, and become hereafter the most noble and glorious beings, that words can express, or the mind of man conceive. Would we therefore seriously reflect, and calmly meditate on these things, we could not possibly live as we now

now do. It would be too hard for human nature to withstand such arguments, did we vigorously apply them to our mind.

If we did heartily believe, and seriously consider what the present life is, and what will become of us hereafter; if we did sedately weigh the infinite disproportion, between a moment and eternity; what a meer trifle would even the greatest business, the most delightful enjoyments, the sharpest sufferings, in reality appear, when compared to that eternal weight of glory, or that everlasting shame and confusion of face, that will be hereafter? And did we in good earnest attend to these things, we should find a sudden alteration in ourselves; new thoughts and desires, new designs and resolutions would then readily spring up, and arise in our minds. And our greatest endeavours would be, to be happy in the next world, whatever becomes of us in this. And were our minds once seriously affected with these things, all the pleasures, riches, honours and allurements of this world, which are so apt to ensnare and captivate us, would appear, as they really are, mean and contemptible. Did we seriously meditate on these things, what noble thoughts and resolutions, would the hopes of living for ever in eternal glory, inspire us with? how regular would it make us in all our conversation? how diligent in mortifying our lusts and evil habits? how strict and solemn, in the exercise of devotion? how serious and constant in the profession of Christ's religion? and how solicitous to keep a good conscience, and to do nothing inconsistent with our duty? Having thus observed some of those great benefits of our salvation, which Christ has procured for us; it will be very proper also to consider, the many and great encouragements, which we have afforded us, to endeavour after the obtaining of it.

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The encouragements given us by God, for procuring our salvation, will appear from the easy terms, on which it is offered, namely God's readiness to accept the greatest sinners, if they will seek after this salvation, and the mighty helps and assistances, which he affords for the obtaining it. Indeed God, when he proposes salvation to us in the gospel, deals with us, as a master does by his servants; we must do some work, before we have our wages: (if salvation can be called wages, or not rather the gracious bounty of God) but as we are bid to *work out our salvation*, some services are expected to be performed on our part, before we can *enter into our master's joy*. But then so infinitely kind a master have we; so noble, so rational, so delightful a service doth he require of us; that the very easiness of the terms, will be one great aggravation of our base and inexcusable guilt, if we slight and contemn a salvation so easy and reasonable.

If the conditions proposed to us, had been like those mentioned by the prophet †, where a man is represented thus to speak, 'wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil? or shall I give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' I say, were these the terms of recommending ourselves to God's favour, we might have reason enough to complain of the severity of them; and to urge that as an excuse for not endeavouring after it. But when the Lord only requires us, to do *justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God*, which is our case; what excuse can be made for those who will neglect a salvation, that may be so easily attained? certain it is, that the terms of our future happiness, as proposed by our Saviour, are in themselves
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† Micah 5.

most agreeable to the make and frame of our nature, highly conducive to the improvement and perfection of our faculties, and very necessary even to our temporal felicity; had there been no promise annexed to them, of an eternal reward. And can we then think it severe treatment, to have all the glories of heaven offered us, upon such conditions as these, namely, that we live up to the dignity of our nature, lead the life of men, and not of brute beasts; that we endeavour to make our abode here as happy as we can, by the practice of virtue and righteousness. These are the terms of salvation offered by the gospel to mankind. And what severity is there in all this? but, alas! the perverseness of sinful men; who might be happy in this world by the practice of virtue, and obtain the happiness of heaven, did they not for a few fading transitory pleasures, despise and neglect it, at the hazard of eternal misery. For let me enquire of any person, whether we can possibly lay a surer foundation for ease and peace, and the enjoyment of ourselves, in all states and conditions of life, than to have a hearty sense of God's presence and goodness? Than to love him, who is the most amiable object; to believe his revelations, who is truth itself; to depend on him in our necessities, and be truly thankful for all his kindness and bounty: to procure to ourselves as many friends, and as few enemies as possible, by being true and faithful, just and honest, meek and patient, kind and charitable; to live in a moderate, sober use of the good things of this life; to keep our passions and appetites within due bounds, so as not to injure our health, nor disturb the ease and quiet of our minds; but to govern ourselves and all our actions, by the law and rule of right reason. And what can be more natural and delightful, or more contribute to a comfortable and happy life in this world, than the practice
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of these things? and yet these are the only severe terms imposed on us by Christ, which so terribly frighten us from pursuing that everlasting salvation, he has offered to us in the gospel.

But it will be urged in answer to all this, that repentance, mortification, and disengaging ourselves from vicious habits, which must be done, in order to our salvation, are not such pleasant and delightful things, but very uneasy and troublesome; and let me say, so is physic to a sick man: and yet when it has performed its operation, then joy and health succeed, to the great pleasure and satisfaction of the person. Besides, the difficulty or uneasiness of these duties do not last long; and even during the time of trial, a man's life is much more easy and comfortable, than while he was a slave to his lusts, and perpetually tormented with an evil conscience. Whoever has tried this, as no doubt many have, will acknowledge the truth thereof. For, religion, whose severities are the greatest at first, yields afterwards more peace, happiness and satisfaction, than can be found in a wicked, sensual and vicious course of life. So that the terms on which Christ hath promised this great salvation, appears to be so highly reasonable, so exceeding easy, that there is no excuse left for that man, who is so careless and remiss, as to neglect it. Especially if we consider how universally it is offered. And

It is tendered most seriously and affectionately to all sorts of men; even to the greatest sinners. How bad so ever our lives have formerly been, or how much soever our consciences are oppressed with the guilt of sin; yet if we comply with our Saviour's terms, he is ready to bestow his salvation upon us. The consideration of this, as it gives us the greatest encouragement to endeavour after it, so if we do not, we shall be still more culpable. For how shall we escape, if we neglect a salvation, which is *tendered*

*dered so freely, so unreservedly, to all sinners, without exception? A sense of guilt often makes men more guilty; despair of mercy, often stops the way to amendment, and carries men on to more wicked and desperate courses. But to have hopes, nay assurance of mercy and forgiveness, should produce quite other effects. For the great God to proclaim his general pardon to all his rebellious creatures; to entreat and beseech them to accept of it, promising his favour and eternal life to all who repent, surely this kind usage should melt any ingenuous mind into the most willing and hearty submission. He must certainly be a most hardened wretch, whom so much goodness will not move to repentance, and to be reconciled to his God, and tender-hearted father. If we consider the surprizing, unexpected mercy, that is offered in the Gospel to the worst of sinners, how ought it to affect us? how should it rouse in the most stupid and insensible, a desire of returning to their gracious God, from whom they have so long departed. For not only the righteous and innocent shall have benefit by the blood of Christ:—those, who thro' a good education, and virtuous dispositions, have in a great measure *escaped the pollutions of the world*, and given up their whole life to the service of Jesus Christ; it is not to these only, that the mercies of the Gospel are extended, but heaven's gate is open, even to the *prodigal children, to those who have wasted all their father's substance, in lewdness and riotous living*; even these our heavenly father is ready to receive with open arms, if they will but return to him. Let all such then, hearken to this and consider it, who have been remiss and careless in their duty; who have never minded God and his religion, but have solely pursued a course of vice, sensuality and wickedness, all their life; who have given the reins to their brutish passions and appetites, and with a high hand*

affronted and provoked the almighty, by their repeated transgressions. And yet, as bad as such are, their case is not desperate, if they will repent. The God of heaven waits for, and is ready to receive and embrace them. For such Christ Jesus shed his precious blood. He begs and intreats them to come and partake of the benefits thereof. The angels of God wish for their conversion, and at the news of it, there will be joy in heaven. All this the gospel gives authority to publish and declare. *Let me therefore in Christ's stead beseech all, to be reconciled to God.* It is not too late, all may be everlastingly happy, if they will consider and turn from their evil ways. Christ yet offers them his salvation. The Lord himself speaks to such, saying, *Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; and then, tho' your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; tho' they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool**. Having then these kind invitations, these reviving hopes, these assurances of God's mercy; why should we be any longer wicked? why should we not presently resolve to leave our sins, and go to our gracious God, who so lovingly calls us to his mercy, to his favour, to our own everlasting salvation? But if after all these astonishing overtures of grace and goodness, any will harden their hearts, and *neglect this great salvation*; let such themselves judge, whether they deserve any favour, pity or compassion, when they most stand in need of it? Alas! it will be a stinging consideration one day, to think of the greatness of that mercy which such now reject; to think how often God called them, but they refused; how often he stretched forth his hand, to have kept them from destruction, but they would not regard him; how often, he would have gathered them to him, as

* Isaiah i. 16, 18.

a hen her chickens, under her wings, but they would not. They will then sadly wish, that they had in time, understood the things which belong to their peace; but it will be too late, they will then be bid from their eyes. Again,

Our neglect of Christ's salvation, will yet farther appear most criminal and inexcusable, if we consider the encouragement given us, by the great assistance God is ready to afford us for obtaining it. Indeed, the sensual and careless, notwithstanding what has been represented, will be apt to take refuge, and say, what tho' heaven be a glorious place, and the way plainly enough described, yet the journey is very long, and we must expect to meet with many difficulties: and however easy and reasonable the course of life leading to it, is represented, yet we find by our own experience, that it is very hard for flesh and blood to live so regular and exact. The temptations to sin are every where so many and powerful, and our own strength to resist them, so little and inconsiderable, that we know not how to undertake such an affair. But, alas! how vain are these pretences and suggestions. As if we had no supports against these discouragements; and that the work of our salvation was left entirely to our own strength. Whereas, if we will but apply to our blessed Saviour for his gracious aid and assistance, were the difficulties we are to conflict with, much more considerable than they are; yet they deserve not to be named, being so exceedingly overballanced by those divine powers and aids, which God will supply us with, if we seriously engage in this work. Christ Jesus hath not only purchased a kingdom for us, and instructed us in the way to it, but he hath procured the holy spirit to be our continual assistant and guide thither. He hath not only given us a most excellent, glorious example, and bid us follow him; but he

hath sent the Holy Ghost, as his vicegerent on earth, to conduct us to the blessed place where he is. We have the grace of God always ready, if we seriously pray for it, to strengthen our weakness, to assist our endeavours, to enlighten our minds, to fortify our wills, to excite our affections, to support us under all temptations; provided we are sincere and honest, in the prosecution of that glorious warfare, whereunto we are called. What can we desire more than this? God hath promised, *that he will never leave nor forsake us; that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus; neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature* *. Nothing under heaven, but ourselves, can do us any mischief.

This being our case, what must be said of us, if we be not virtuous and happy? how shall we think to escape, if we neglect a salvation, for the obtaining of which we have such mighty succours and assistances afforded? Let then these considerations fire us into brave and worthy thoughts; let us make no more vain excuses, no longer pretend we know not what difficulties; but let us chearfully and resolutely apply ourselves to the working out our salvation; knowing, that *as it is God that worketh in us the will, so the same God will also work in us the power of doing it*. We have no reason to be afraid or discouraged at any thing. For almighty God is with us, he that made us, still takes care of us; and is ever ready to assist all his faithful servants, in their greatest extremities. Christ Jesus our high priest sits at the right hand of God, and continually makes intercession for us. The Holy Spirit never fails to afford his presence in the souls of well disposed persons, to carry them thro' all

* Heb. 13. 5. Rom. 8. 38.

all dangers, difficulties, and temptations. In a word, we need not fear of succeeding, if we do but design, resolve, and endeavour to do our duty to God and man.

DISCOURSE XXVII. *Bp. Stillingfleet.*

The reasonableness of the terms of salvation, and the great danger of rejecting them.

Heb. ii. 3.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

WHEN the wise and eternal counsels of heaven, concerning the salvation of mankind, by the death of the son of God, were first declared to the world, by his own appearance and preaching; nothing could be more reasonably expected, than that the dignity of his person, the authority of his doctrine, and excellency of his life, should have persuaded men to imitate so holy an example. For if either the worth of a person, or the importance of any message, merited a kind and honorable reception among men, it was certainly our Saviour, and the errand he came upon. If to give mankind assurance of a state of life and immortality, to offer pardon of sin and reconciliation with God, on the most easy and reasonable terms; if to reform the degenerate world from all impurity, by a doctrine holy, as its author, were things becoming the son of God to reveal, and the sons of men to

receive : nothing could be more abominably wicked, than that this person should be despised, his authority slighted, and his doctrine contemned. For the greater the salvation was, that his kindness tendered to men, the more prevailing the motives for embracing his doctrine ; the more exemplary and severe will the punishment be, on those who reject it. Nothing being more agreeable to those eternal laws of justice, by which God governs the world, than that punishment should be in proportion to the mercy despised : and tho' the scripture does not expressly tell us, what the future state of those shall be, who never heard of the gospel, yet it plainly declares, that an eternal misery is the just desert of all such as neglect an eternal happiness when offered to them. So that the danger of neglecting the salvation tendered by the gospel is exceeding great ; *for how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation * ?* that is, if either thro' too mean an estimation of the excellency of christianity, we reject ; or, if thro' too great an opinion of the wisdom of this world, we slight, despise and disesteem the gospel as vain and useless ; if thro' too great a love of the pleasures of sin, or a secure careless temper of mind, we do not perform what christianity requires, to make us happy ; what way can we find to escape the wrath of God ? For if God was severe against the violation of a far meaner institution, namely, the law of *Moses*, that every contempt and disobedience did receive a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape who neglect a much greater salvation ?

This, tho' a melancholy subject, is very necessary to be treated on in our age, wherein men seem inapprehensive of the danger of neglecting and despising the religion they profess, and by which they hope to be saved. It is not only the notorious and open sinner, that defies heaven, and dares God by his

* Heb. 2. 3.

his oaths and blasphemies, to display his power and justice on him ; but also the sly and self-deceiving hypocrite, who in his heart hates and contemns religion, while he pretends to love it. There is some ingenuity in an open enemy, but none so dangerous as a disguised friend. In our Saviour's time, some were so enraged against him, that they contrived all ways for his disgrace and punishment. Others could hear him with patience, *but the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, choaked and stifled* all good apprehensions of him, so that they became weak, and ineffectual †. And as then, some were *eating and drinking*, minding nothing but vain and sensual pleasures ; others so busy in *buying and selling*, that they had no leisure to think of being happy hereafter ; some deriding and blaspheming, and all too conceitedly wise, or too vain and profane, to mind the offers of eternal salvation : So I could wish it was otherwise now ; and that a sensual, voluptuous, and careless life in some ; that ambition, a restless pursuit after honours and riches in others ; that a profane wit and contempt of all things serious, in those who think themselves too great to be religious ; did not enervate the force of christianity, and make all such neglect their own salvation. But is the case of these men so very desperate, that no remedy will succeed ? Hath love to sin and the world so far intoxicated them, that no reason and consideration can awaken them ? Will neither the love of happiness, nor the fear of misery, their own interest, nor the dread majesty and power of God, as to the horrors and terrors of the last day, so far prevail on men, as at least to consider, whether these things are true ? And if they be ; not foolishly to neglect them. Let me therefore desire such persons seriously to regard the following considerations.

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† Mark 4. 19.

That God by the gospel hath taken so much care of men's salvation, that nothing but their own neglect, can make them miserable. Whatever is necessary to make men happy, in their present fallen and degenerate condition, is abundantly provided for by the gospel of Christ; which affords us all things that can conduce to our happiness. There we have the most agreeable notion and idea of perfect bliss, the most extensive offers of divine goodness to obtain it, the utmost assurance that these things proceeded from God, and the most encouraging motives to comply with the terms of that great salvation, which is there tendered to us.

We have in the gospel the most agreeable notion of true happiness; not such as depends on the continual vicissitudes and contingencies of this present state, but that which will support the mind of man, under every trouble, and conduct him safe to a distant region, where is fulness of joy without any alloy, and rivers of pleasures for ever flowing. Our blessed Saviour never flattered his followers, with the expectation of a temporal felicity; contentment indeed he promised them, and which if they observe his directions, may be easily obtained, let this world frown or smile on them. He never tells his disciples, they may expect satisfaction if they lie on beds of down, with their heads full of tormenting care; or that the pleasure of this life consists in the gratification of their senses. He does not deceive them with the promise of so poor a happiness as that of enjoying health, friends, prosperity, and gratifying our own vain wills. No, he proposes a more noble and generous felicity, which, in defiance to the world, will preserve its own state and grandeur; a happiness consistent with loss of estate and friends, with affronts and injuries, with persecutions and death itself. In our Saviour's discourses of happiness, we meet with no *Epicurean* soft-

softness, no rigid, incredible *Stoical* paradoxes; no *Aristotelian* suppositions of a prosperous life for virtue to shew its power; but he declares it to be only true goodness, and which lies in every man's own breast, to make his condition and happiness consistent. In that excellent abstract of christianity, his sermon on the mount, the persons whom he calls blessed, are not the rich and great men of the world, but those who being poor in spirit, as well as circumstances, are contented with their condition; not those, who are full of mirth and jollity, laughing away one half of their time, and sleeping the rest; but they who mourn by reason of their own sorrows, and great imperfections, or else out of compassion to the troubles of others: not those who give, but cannot bear affronts, thinking the life of man a small sacrifice for words of disgrace; but the *meek and patient* spirit, that is not apt to provoke nor be enraged; who prefers the rules of christianity, to all the barbarous punctilios of honour: not those who are impetuous in the pursuit of their designs, and eager to taste the fruits of them; but such who make *righteousness and goodness* their *meat and drink*, which they *hunger and thirst* after, taking as much pleasure therein as the most voluptuous *Epicure* can in his greatest delicacies: not those, whose hearts are full of dissimulation and hypocrisy, and are careful only to seem good; but such whose inward integrity, and *purity of heart*, far exceeds outward shew and profession: who honour goodness for itself, and not for the glory which adorns it. The foundation of a Christian's happiness is the expectation of a life to come, which Christ by his death and sufferings hath given us so firm an assurance of, as is sufficient to influence and bear up our minds against all the vicissitudes of this present state.

We have also the most extensive offers of divine goodness to obtain this happiness. Indeed, was it as easy to govern our passions, as to know that it is our duty; were the impressions of reason and religion as powerful with mankind, as are those of folly and wickedness; we should have no cause to complain of this world's misery, nor to fear a worse hereafter. We might then with an easy mind bear any condition here; and one day led agreeable to the principles of virtue and goodness, would be preferred to a sinning immortality: But we having lost the command of ourselves, our passions govern us. 'Tis an established maxim with the *Epicureans*, "That no man could live a pleasant life, without being good;" nay, all the multiplied sects of philosophers, even the very worst sort, made virtue necessary to happiness. But tho' they agreed it was impossible for a vicious man to enjoy any true content of mind; yet they fell into such nice and subtle disputes, about the nature of happiness, and the method of curing the disorders of mens lives, as to lose the great effect of all their common principles. But suppose they had gone further, and that all wise men could have governed their passions, as to the troubles of this life, which is certainly the truest wisdom; yet what preparation was this for an eternal state, of which they knew little, and minded less? All their discourse about a happy life here was vain, and contradicted by themselves. So that unless God had given assurance of a life to come, by the greatest demonstration, that of the death and resurrection of his Son, all the considerations in the world would never have made mankind happy. But by the gospel he hath removed all doubts concerning a future state, and fully declared his readiness to be reconciled to us on our repentance, to pardon what we have done amiss, to afford us his grace to govern our wills, and subdue our passions;

passions; and upon due submission to his wise providence, and sincere obedience to his laws, he hath promised us eternal salvation, in the next life.

And God hath also given us the greatest assurance that these offers came from himself, for the apostle informs us; that this *salvation began at first to be spoken by our Lord, and was confirmed by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness by signs and wonders.* And what greater satisfaction could men in reason desire? And as it might justly be expected, that the messenger of so great news to the world, should be no mean, ordinary person, so neither was he: For no less than the eternal Son of God came down from the bosom of his Father, to rectify the mistakes of mankind, to shew them the way to be happy, and persuade them to it, by the most powerful arguments. Nay, we find all the three persons of the Trinity engaged in the great work of man's salvation; *it was first spoken by our Lord, God also bearing them witness, and that with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.* So that not only the first revelation, but the testimony to confirm it, was from God; nor was there ever any divine truths so clearly attested as that of the gospel. From whence it follows, that the foundation of our faith is built on divine testimony, and which God gave to establish the truth of his revealed will. If then any ask us, why we believe that great salvation which the gospel offers? the answer is, because it was *declared by our Lord*, who neither could nor would deceive us. If it be further enquired, how we know that this was *delivered by our Lord?* the answer plainly is, because this was the doctrine of all his disciples, of those who constantly *heard and conversed with him.* Should it be again asked, how can we know that their testimony was infallible, since they were but men? this is resolved by God himself, who *are witness to them by signs and wonders, diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.*

And if these arguments cannot convince men, none will. But who are we, not to think that sufficient which God has thought so? How dare we question the certainty of what is attested by the broad seal of heaven? And those that cavil at this way of proof, would do the same had God made choice of any other method. Lastly,

In the gospel are the most prevailing motives to persuade men to accept of these offers of salvation. There are two passions which are the great hinges of government, namely mens hopes and fears; and therefore, all laws have had their sanctions by rewards and punishments. But there never was any reward which gave greater encouragement to hope, nor any punishment which made fear more reasonable, than what the gospel proposes. And if the hopes of heaven and fears of hell will not make men good, what other arguments can be used to influence mankind? The gospel threatens future misery to those who neglect their salvation, calling it *everlasting fire, the worm that never dies, the wrath to come, everlasting destruction* *; the apprehension of which is enough to fill men's minds with horror, but much more dreadful to endure it. And as the gospel suggests the most proper object of fear, to deter men from sin; so it does of hope, to encourage them to be good. A happiness much easier to be hoped for than comprehended; a happiness infinitely above the most ambitious hopes and glories of this world; wherein greatness is added to glory, weight and eternity to both; and therefore called, *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* †. The joys shall be full and constant, the perception clear and undisturbed, in the enjoyment of continual delight and desire; where there shall be no fears to disquiet, no enemies to alarm, no dangers to conquer,

* Mat. 25. 41. Mark 9. 44: 1 Thess. 1. 10.

† 2 Cor. 4. 17.

quer, nothing but uninterrupted peace, inexpressible joy, and pleasures for ever more. And what could be more satisfactory to minds tired with this world's vanities, than such a repose as this? What more agreeable to the desires of good men, than to be eased of this clog of flesh; and to spend eternity with the fountain of goodness, with the *spirits of just men made perfect*? What more ravishing delight to pious souls, than to be *singing hallelujahs to him that sits on the throne, and to the lamb for ever and ever*? How despicable are those things which men hope for in this world, compared with that great salvation which the gospel so freely tenders? What a mean thing is it to be great, rich, and honourable here, by which we are the envy of some, the malice of others; and at last, to be for ever miserable? But O the wisdom of that happiness which carries a man with contentment and peace thro' this life, and rewards him in the next with a crown of everlasting felicity! Thus does the gospel propose the most excellent means to make men happy, unless by their own fatal neglect they become for ever miserable, and for which they can only blame themselves.

Since then God has been so tender of our happiness, why should we neglect it ourselves? Is it too mean an employment to mind our eternal welfare? Are God and religion so contemptible, as that we must scorn and despise them? What business is it that will fit the tempers of mankind? Is time better spent at the glass and in dressing, than at our devotions? Is it to be thrown away in seeing plays and reading romances? or, is it to be employed in excesses and debaucheries, and to make us slaves to our lusts? These things, no philosopher or wise man will say, are the end of man's life. I appeal then to the consciences of all such who have any sense of humanity, and the common interests of mankind

mankind (even setting aside the considerations of a future state) whether to be just and sober, virtuous and good, is not more suitable to the design of human nature, than all the vanities and excesses, all the arts and designs, with which men are apt to please themselves? If so, shall eternal happiness which attends goodness make it less desirable? surely not. And the certainty of attaining these virtues should make a wise man very solicitous about them.

Whoever examines these concerns with a free and serious mind, and according to the reason of things, will find, that the interests of a future state are far more certain, as well as desirable, than the pleasures of this present life. The riches and honours of this world, however uncertain, never hinder the covetous or ambitious from earnestly pursuing them. And shall not then the mighty arguments which God hath used to assure the certainty of another life, prevail on us to look more seriously after it? Shall the amazing love of the Father, the inexpressible sufferings of the Son of God, the miraculous descent and powerful assistance of the Holy Ghost, have no more impression on our minds, than to leave us indifferent and unwilling to obtain a future state? What mighty doubts and suspicions of God, what distrusts of human nature, what ingratitude and folly must lie at the bottom of all this infidelity and neglect? *O fools and slow of heart, to disbelieve, not only, what the prophets have spoken, but what our Lord hath declared, God himself hath given testimony to, and the Holy Ghost hath confirm'd!* Besides, is not our interest concerned in these things? Is it equal to us, whether our souls are immortal or no? whether they live in eternal felicity, or everlasting misery? But this is too absurd and unreasonable to suppose: So that it is evident, there is no possibility of escaping, if we continue to neglect

glect this great salvation ; for hereafter nothing *will remain, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and the fiery indignation of God.*

How then can that man ever hope to be saved by him, whose *blood he despises and tramples under foot* ? What grace and favour can he expect from God, who hath *done despite unto the spirit of grace* ; who hath rejected with reproach and contempt the kind offers of heaven ? What can save him who resolves to be damned ; and yet this every one does who continues in sin ? God himself, in whose only pity our hopes are, hath irreversibly decreed, that he will spare none who despise his goodness, slight his threatenings, abuse his patience, and sin the more because he offers to forgive and pardon. It is not any delight that God takes in the misery of his creatures, which makes him punish them ; but shall not God vindicate his honour against obstinate and impenitent sinners ? He beforehand declares that he takes no pleasure in their ruin ; but if men resolve to despise his offers, and reject the means of their salvation, shall not God be *just*, without being thought *cruel* ? And we may be assured, that none will suffer more than the just desert of their sins ; for punishment is only a *just recompence of reward*. If the violation of *the law delivered by angels*, was severely punished ; how shall we think to *escape*, who neglect a more excellent means of happiness, which was delivered by *our Lord himself* ? If God did not hate sin, and there was to be no punishment for it, why did the Son of God die for the expiation of it ? Let us not then think to trifle with God, and imagine it to be impossible for a being so kind and merciful ever to punish his creatures with the miseries of another life. For *God will not be mocked, whatever a man soweth, that he shall reap ; he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that*
soweth

soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap everlasting life †.

Let us then consider, that by neglecting the offer of eternal happiness, we reject the greatest kindness, that was ever expressed to the world; even the foundation of our present peace, the end of our beings, the stay of our minds, the desire of our souls, the utmost felicity human nature is capable of. It is to neglect the favour of God, the love of his Son, and that salvation which he hath purchased. Had men any regard for God, any esteem for his love, or their own welfare, they would be much more serious than they are, in religion. Can those who are wholly immersed in affairs of the world, who spend their time in luxury and vanity, be supposed to have any esteem for God, or their own souls? When we see a man serious in the pursuit of worldly concerns, thoughtful and busy, subtle in contriving, and careful in managing them, but very remiss and negligent in religion; what must be imagined, but that he thinks the things of this world of greater value, than those which concern his eternal salvation? But let such consider, before it is too late, and repent of so great folly. Let them regard an immortal soul, think what reconciliation with God, and the pardon of sin are worth. Let them not slight the dear purchase, even the blood of the Son of God, and then they cannot but carefully mind the great salvation which God hath tendered.

Consider also you that forget God, what those things are for which you neglect your salvation. Is there such delight in sin, or this world's vanities, as to compensate for everlasting misery? How will your debaucheries and neglect of God appear to yourselves, when you come to die? How uncomfortable will be the remembrance of all your excesses, oaths, injustice, and profaneness, when death

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and judgment approach? O consider the consequence of this neglect, which is not only the loss of a great salvation, but the incurring as great damnation. The scripture describes the miseries of a future state, by the most sensible and painful things. If destruction is dreadful, what is *everlasting destruction*? If the anguish of the soul, and the pains of the body are troublesome, what will the *destruction be both of body and soul in hell*? If a serpent gnawing in our bowels, must be an insupportable misery, what will be the *worm that never dies*? If a raging devouring fire, that can only last till it hath consumed a fading substance, is in appearance so amazing, and in reality so violently painful; what then will be the enduring of God's wrath, which shall burn like fire, and yet be everlasting?

Let us then consider these things, and think it an inestimable mercy that we have time to repent, and beg pardon of God; let us depart from iniquity, be frequent in prayer, careful of our actions, and in all things obedient to the will of God; then will he mercifully forgive our former neglects, and grant us this great salvation. Let us be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the word of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord* †. Our Saviour has assured us, that if we be stedfast in our religion, and persevere in our obedience to it, nothing shall hurt us, but we shall be *more than conquerors over all our enemies, even over death itself*. And what greater encouragement can any man desire, than to be assured that his labour shall not only, *not be in vain*, but that it shall also meet with a great and inexpressible reward? What greater reward can possibly be proposed, than deliverance from death, and an entrance into life eternal? If then we in earnest believe these things, as by our religion we profess and pretend

† 1 Cor. 15. 58.

pretend to do, let us consider and urge them upon our selves; let us, by frequent meditation, convince ourselves of the truth and importance of them; and let us always so live, as being under the power of these convictions. Let not the terror of short and temporary evils, drive us into sin, who are convinced that the consequence of that sin, will be misery and death eternal: And let not the allurements of short and transitory pleasures withdraw us from our duty, who are convinced that the performance of that duty, will be life and happiness for ever. The religion of Christ requires nothing of us, but what is extremely reasonable, and manifestly for our advantage, namely, to *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*; yet does it promise to obedience such an infinite reward, as life from the dead, even life everlasting. And he that will not by such motives be persuaded, to be steadfast in such a religion, must have lost all sense of virtue and goodness, as also of his own interest and happiness.

If we sincerely repent and return to the obedience of God's commands, according to the gracious terms and conditions of the gospel; we shall, thro' the intercession of Christ, be accepted by our heavenly father. But then we must always remember, that without this obedience we shall still be rejected, notwithstanding what our Saviour has done for us; nay, we shall be condemned with so much a severer sentence, as he has offered us greater means and opportunities of salvation. For, if we rebel against God, and disobey his commandments, live viciously and profanely in this present world; "it had been better for us, not to have known the
"way of truth, than after we have known it, to
"turn from the holy commandment delivered unto
"us." Our Saviour has purchased redemption for us, upon the gracious terms of faith and obedience;
but

but without this obedience, we can have no benefit, even of that most perfect redemption. Wherefore if we resist, and grieve the good spirit of God, by any vicious practices, we have no part in him, nor will God receive us, as his sons or servants. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God; nor he that loveth not his brother* *. Let us then take heed, not to neglect or despise the offer of so great salvation, lest we are condemned to the severest punishments. *For if he that despised Moses's law, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the spirit of grace* †.

DISCOURSE XXVIII. Bp. Hoadly.

Some mistakes rectified, as to faith and works; repentance and Christ's merits.

Ephes. 2. 8.

For by grace are you saved thro' faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

THE great concern of all Christians, is so to pass thro' things temporal, that they finally lose not the things eternal. And the most important enquiry in order to this, is the certain knowledge of

* 1 John 3. 9. † Heb. 10. 28.

of those terms on which God will pardon and accept us. But as there is no point more essential for Christians to be acquainted with, so neither is there any more liable to mistakes; and all pretended to be founded on scripture, some of which I propose now to examine.

The first mistake I shall consider, is that of those who rely upon faith; or by only believing in Jesus Christ, expect salvation from him, without observing the laws of the gospel. And these words of St. Paul, *For by grace are you saved thro' faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God* ||, have been often alledged to this purpose, by those who are unwilling to reform what is amiss in themselves. But it should be considered, that the apostle is here speaking of the condition in which the *Ephesians* were, before their conversion from heathenism, to the belief of the gospel. After magnifying God's mercy and the exceeding riches of his grace and favour to them, he proceeds to make them sensible of their obligation to God, who had thus *quickned* them who *were dead in sins*; and then tells them, that they were *saved thro' faith*, by the meer grace, favour, or mercy of God; who puts them into a method, and state of salvation, by means of their receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was God's own act, his meer mercy, that he would accept of them, on their believing in Christ. Their being saved in this method, was *not of themselves*, or by any contrivance of their own; but it was by the grace or mercy of God, and by his free gift, that they were put into this happy state by the gospel. It was *not of works*, says St. Paul, *lest any man should boast*; that is, this gracious method of salvation, was not owing to their own contrivance; nor merited at God's hand, by any preceding perfection or good behaviour of theirs.

For

Disc XXVIII. *as to faith and works, &c.* 45

For they were dead in *trespasses* and *sins*, when called to the knowledge of this merciful dispensation, so that they had nothing in themselves to boast of, as deserving this indulgence from God. The manifest design then of the apostle in these words, was to raise the gratitude of the *Ephesians* to almighty God, and to inspire them with all possible regard to him, by reminding them of their former miserable condition; *being dead in sins*, void of the true life of reasonable creatures; having no thought of such salvation as the christian religion proposed; nor yet any merit in themselves, to expect it. That it was of his *grace* or *favour*, they were *saved* from their former evil state of sin, by believing and receiving the gospel; for which they were obliged to magnify God's great mercy towards them, and not to attribute any thing to themselves. Their being saved in this method, was wholly owing to the good will of God, whose free offer and gift it was.

That *faith* alone, separated from a good life, will not justify us at the last day, is evident from many expressions both of St. *Paul* and St. *James*.

As to this passage of St. *Paul* of our being *saved* by or thro' *faith*, it signifies, our being put into the true way of salvation by believing in Christ.

Whatever is necessary to salvation may be represented as the method leading to it; and since faith or believing in Christ, and receiving him for our master, is requisite thereto, we may be said to be saved by *faith*; and yet there may be other things equally necessary and indispensable.

But doth not St. *Paul* expressly attribute justification to faith, without the works of the law? to which I answer, doth not St. *James* as positively say, that *faith*, without moral works, is not sufficient to salvation *? and St. *James's* epistle is of authority

* Jam. 2. 14.

authority with Christians, as well as St. *Paul's*. But indeed St. *Paul* does not intend what some would fix on him. For that apostle there speaks of the works of the law, such as circumcision, which he proves were not necessary, from the example of *Abraham*, who was justified by the eminent faith which he had before circumcision. Besides, St. *Paul* uses the word *faith*, for the *gospel dispensation*, which he says is sufficient without observing the *mosaical* ceremonies; but he never attempts to make men believe, that a meer empty faith, void of good works, can save any man at the last, the contrary to which he asserts in all his epistles.

As to what is said by both these apostles, concerning the *faith* and *justification* of *Abraham* and of Christians, it may be proper to make a few observations. St. *Paul* saith *Abraham* was justified without and before such works as circumcision. St. *James* saith, that *Abraham* was not justified by an empty faith, without works of obedience, by which he shewed the reality of his faith; in this there is no contradiction between them. So likewise Christians will be justified by means of believing the gospel, without circumcision, or any other works of the ceremonial law, as St. *Paul* argued; but they will never be justified and finally acquitted by any belief in Christ, without performing such good works as St. *James* saith the gospel directs and commands them to practise. Again, *Abraham*, for one single act of faith and trust in God, was called by St. *Paul*, *righteous*, and reputed as such; but St. *James* assures us that this faith of *Abraham*, was not such an empty faith as some Christians rely on; nor that he would have been justified finally by God, unless he had shewn by the obedience of his life, that his faith was sincere. In this there is no contradiction. It is also true, that a Christian, on his first believing the gospel, and receiving Jesus
Christ

Christ as the Messiah and Saviour of the world, is acquitted from the guilt of his past sins, and reputed, for the sake of his faith, as a righteous person, clear from all past guilt; agreeably to what *St. Paul* taught the first Christians, who were converted at riper years, from a life of infidelity and sin: and it is equally true, that no Christian, who after his conversion hath opportunity to practise holiness, and yet continues to live wickedly, shall be finally justified and acquitted at the last day, for the sake of his believing in Christ; but that the final justification of such Christians depends on shewing their faith by their works, as *St. James* expresseth it, and on their bringing forth good fruit in their lives and conversation. So that these two apostles perfectly agree as to the necessity of a good life. But we should, as to this point, carefully observe one distinction, namely, that believing in Jesus Christ acquits from the guilt of sins committed before such belief, in order to a better future life, which was what *St. Paul* frequently affirmed; but that believing in Jesus Christ doth not acquit from the guilt of any sins continued in after this belief, and during our christian profession, but indeed extremely adds to it; and this is what *St. James* in effect says, as does also *St. Paul* in this very epistle, and many other places.

For he declares, that we Christians are *God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works* †. That is we are converted to Christianity by the will of God, to the end that we may perform good works. And tho' in some places he undervalues the merits of men before the coming of the gospel, and the works of the law of *Mose*, with which some would have burdened the Christian profession; yet he no where depreciates the works of evangelical righteousness, or obedience to the moral laws

† Ephes. 1. 10.

laws of virtue. Nay, whenever he speaks of moral duties, with how much vehemence doth he recommend them? When he observes how the *Ephesians* or other Christians, improved in virtue after their conversion to Christianity, what commendations doth he give them? with how much joy doth he offer up his thanks to God for it? but we never find him depressing such good works, or setting up *faith* against them. In this very epistle, how many moral duties and good works doth he press upon the *Ephesians* *? how solemnly doth he assure them, that those immoralities, which he there mentions, will exclude all who are guilty of them from the kingdom of heaven; and adds, *That because of these things, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience. He exhorteth them to walk as children of the light, for the fruit of the spirit is all goodness, righteousness and truth* ||. And doth this look as if St. Paul taught, that *faith*, without goodness and virtue, would save them at last? And our Saviour foreseeing that many of his professors and disciples would endeavour to elude the great design of his coming into the world, declares, that *not every one that saith unto me, Lord Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my father which is in heaven.* So that it is not believing in Christ, or acknowledging him for our master, or applying his merits to ourselves, that will avail us at last; *but the doing the will of his father*, and paying a constant universal obedience to all his commands. And indeed to think otherwise is directly contrary to the design of the Christian religion. For if the meer believing in Christ shall save us at last, tho' we afterwards continue wilfully to persist in disobedience to his commands, then it is not true that he came to *call sinners to repentance*, nor that the *grace of God hath appeared to all men in the gospel*.

* Ephes. 5. 5. || 8. 9.

pel, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; then it is not true, that our Lord expects us to bring forth fruit, and be prepared for his coming by good works, nor that he will judge us according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil. And yet all these things are true, and most expressly and positively asserted in the new testament; and consequently it cannot be true, that faith without good works will save us at last. For whatever takes away the absolute necessity of an holy virtuous conversation, cannot be true.

But it may be necessary to consider, how some expressions of holy scripture must be understood, concerning our being saved by or thro' *faith*; and in what sense Christians may be said to be *saved by faith*, or believing in Jesus Christ. In answer to this, it may be truly said, that the first Christians, who were converted from a life of sin and wickedness, were saved from the guilt of all their former sins, on their believing in Christ. And therefore this their first justification is often inculcated by St. Paul in his epistles, and attributed to *faith*. But this doth not concern those who have been educated and instructed in the knowledge of the Christian religion. And yet we may be said to be saved thro' *faith*, because it is by believing in Jesus Christ, that we come to know and embrace the terms which God offers for our salvation and happiness. He is the way, the truth, and the life, so that without knowing and believing in him, how should we know the way, or the path to eternal life? Salvation therefore may properly be attributed to believing in him, because he alone can put us into the method of obtaining it. Again, Christians are *saved by faith*, as it is the foundation of their obedience. St. James says, the only way of proving we have

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faith, is by our good actions †; of which a sincere faith is never destitute. And a faith that thus influences our actions, even St. *James* allows may save us.

In the eleventh of the *Hebrews*, we read of the great excellencies and advantages of faith, and of its acceptableness to God, for *without faith it is impossible to please God*; because, without faith we cannot live a life of virtue, or do such good actions as are there recorded. So that by faith is there meant a vital active principle, exciting us to behave agreeably thereto. And with respect to Christians, *faith* must be an active principle, influencing them to a right behaviour and conduct, to such a life and conversation, as the believing in such a master naturally directs to. If we truly believe in God, we cannot but love and honour him above all things. If we sincerely believe in Christ, we cannot but endeavour to obey his commands, observe his precepts, and follow his example. And thus shall we be *saved thro' faith*, or by believing in him; because this faith, if sincere, will be the foundation of such an universal obedience as he requires. In these senses, salvation may be attributed to faith, even from the scripture; but then care must be taken not to interpret any one expression of the new testament, so as to contradict the plainest and most repeated declarations of it. To conclude this point, *faith* is an act of the mind most acceptable to God; and faith in his son saves us, as it puts us in the sure way to salvation, if we are sincere; and is the foundation of all Christian grace, and of our best behaviour. This *faith* alone, without the works of the ceremonial law of *Moses*, is sufficient to secure to us our future happiness. But *faith*, or a belief in Christ, without obedience to his laws; an empty unfruitful faith, accompanied with an impenitent life, will condemn us at last. We are saved
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† James 2. 15.

thro' faith, or believing in Christ, no otherwise, than by being influenced thereby; for faith is required in order to practice. As faith is indispensably necessary to salvation, so is a good life. A faith working by love, and manifesting itself by good works, is that alone, which will be of any account to us at the last. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

I now proceed to consider another mistake, that of relying on the merits of Christ for salvation. Because the apostle says, *If a man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins* *: therefore too many professed Christians have taken occasion from this, and some other places in the new testament, to frame such notions concerning the merits of Christ, the sacrifice of his death, and his intercession with the father; as to comfort themselves in their continuance in sin: which is a most pernicious mistake.

As to the scripture doctrine concerning the merits of Christ, or the effect of his sufferings, towards the obtaining the pardon of our sins and eternal happiness; it is very clear and evident, that in order to our acceptance and final justification thro' Jesus Christ, the gospel absolutely requires us to forsake those sins, which we have been guilty of, and sincerely to practise an universal obedience to the whole will of God. For when the apostle says, *that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins*, he means those sins which we carefully endeavour to avoid and forsake; not those which we wilfully continue in. And as to the merits of Christ, so much magnified by some; tho' they are so great, that for the sake of his sufferings, God will accept to his favour and mercy, all who embrace the terms offered by the gospel, all who relinquish and abandon their vices, and live an universal holy life; yet they

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• John 2. 1. 2.

will not avail for such as still continue, notwithstanding all the calls of God, and his denunciations against sin, to follow their own lusts, to oppose and contradict the will of God. That Christians lie under an indispensable necessity to forsake their sins in order to their pardon, is manifest from many places in the new testament. And if these conditions are thus plainly and expressly required in the gospel covenant, there can be no pardon nor salvation hoped for, without forsaking our sins, and obeying the moral laws of the gospel. And indeed, what more could be expected or reasonably wished for, from a God of holiness and wisdom, as well as mercy; than to offer pardon and salvation on these conditions only? since by this method he gives all the comfort to sinners that is necessary, without encouraging them to continue in sin; and yet all possible discouragement to vice, without making every instance of it absolutely unpardonable.

But say some, the merits of Jesus Christ are infinite, and therefore every thing may be expected from them. To this I answer, that the question is not, what the merits of Christ are in themselves, but what the gospel declares they have obtained for sincere believers; so that supposing the merits and value of Christ's sufferings to be unbounded and infinite, considered without the gospel covenant; yet when it pleased God to make a covenant by these sufferings, the merit of such sufferings, with respect to those admitted into this covenant, must be bounded by the plain terms and conditions of it. The will and wisdom of God must determine what these conditions are, and what the sufferings of Christ shall procure us; for they can be no more than what he has declared them to be. Let therefore the merits of Christ be never so unlimited before this covenant, let the value of his propitiation

tion be infinite, yet they are bounded as to us, when God declares what his will therein is, as to the extent of these sufferings; and this he has done in the gospel of Christ. So that when our Saviour tells us, that God will accept returning sinners on their amendment, and that such as continue in their sins, shall be excluded his kingdom; he doth, in effect, declare to all Christians, that he hath no merits available for any who will not reform their lives; that tho' he be the propitiation for their sins, yet it is only for those, they have left and forsaken: The extent and effect of Christ's merits, with respect to his followers, being only, that for the sake of his sufferings, God will forgive the sins of all who heartily abhor and forsake them, and make all such happy as sincerely endeavour to practise righteousness, and keep his commandments. Whoever reads the New Testament with a well disposed mind, will find that this is the whole doctrine of Christ and his apostles, concerning the merits and value of his sufferings, and their efficacy towards the pardon and salvation of those who believe in him.

The Christian religion being holy, pure, and spotless, revealed by the Son of God from heaven, for the conversion and amendment of the world, requiring us to forsake all sin, and to live in all holy obedience to God; it is impossible that it should afford any comfort to such as continue in sin, because this would be to destroy its own main design, and to frustrate its own great end. Hence therefore appears the great absurdity of arguing from any general declarations in scripture, concerning a sacrifice for sin, or a propitiation of invaluable merits, that will be available for those sins of Christians, in which they wilfully continue; because this is to contradict the great end of the gospel, to make all virtue unnecessary, and to turn Christianity into a confident appeal to Christ's merits. For how un-

reasonable and absurd is it, to suppose that God should send a person from heaven, to live and die here on earth, to teach mankind an excellent doctrine, and yet at the same time to declare, that it is no great matter whether they imitate his example, or obey his precepts; so as they do but trust in his merits, rely upon his sacrifice, and confide in the infinite value of his sufferings. Can any one believe this possible, who considers that God is an holy and wise being, and at an infinite distance from all sin and iniquity? For what would this be but to reveal a religion from heaven, with the greatest pomp, on purpose to assure men, that virtue is of no great importance, and to encourage vice and immorality in the world? for in truth, such pretences of Christians do manifestly tend to nothing else, but to render vain and ineffectual all the moral precepts of the gospel, and to bring into contempt whatever is substantially good in religion.

Besides, how base and ungrateful is it to make use of God's goodness and those sufferings of Christ, which were the highest instance of his love to mankind, as an encouragement to continue in our sins? how would it sound in the ears of even the meanest capacity, to hear Christians speak thus; '*God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten son, to manifest his love in dying for sinners after an unparalleled manner; and therefore we may affront him and join ourselves to his greatest adversary the devil, not doubting but that thro' his merits and sufferings, God will use and treat us as his friends?*' and yet this is what every sinner must think with himself, who is resolved to continue such, relying on the merits of Christ for pardon and salvation. Suppose a prince should send his own son to a company of professed rebels, and for the sake of what he should do and suffer amongst them, offer to be reconciled to such as should thereby be influenced to repent
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and turn to their obedience: What greater affront or indignity can be shewn to such prince, than for those who embrace his offers, afterwards to disobey his just commands, as much as before, and then plead the sufferings of his son, and urge his merits to screen them from punishment? would not this be the greatest abuse of so much mercy?

Having sufficiently enlarged on this head, I shall now briefly consider what uses Christians are to make of the merits of Jesus Christ, and the value of his sufferings. And,

1. We may lawfully and justly plead before God, the merits of his Son, and of his invaluable sacrifice, as that atonement which he will accept for those sins we forsake and abandon. We may with a well grounded assurance beg of him to pardon all our past sins, and to accept of our sincere endeavours to conform to his will in all things. This is the only trust in the merits of Christ, from which we can justly expect to reap any comfort or advantage; because it is the only trust that is agreeable to the nature and design of the gospel, and to the many plain declarations of the new testament: The constant doctrine of which is, that those who have wilfully continued sinners to the last, have no part in the revealed promises of God, nor the least right to apply to themselves Christ's merits, which only belong to such as have forsaken and renounced their sins. For if this is not true, then the gospel makes no difference between a virtuous and vicious life; but eternal happiness will depend on such a confidence as the best Christians often want, and the worst generally abound in.

2. We ought to draw a strong argument against sin, and for all holy obedience, from those very merits and sufferings of Christ, under which some Christians would conceal their continued iniquities. For if Christ is the propitiation for our sins, then

how odious must sin be to almighty God, who took so severe a method to be reconciled to sinners? and how hateful, how abominable should sin appear, to all Christians, who know this? *If God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son*; if this Son of his voluntarily humbled himself to the vilest death for us; how ought we to study to do every thing pleasing to him, and to avoid whatever he hates and abhors? If so invaluable a price was paid, as the death of the Son of God, to reconcile us to God, how ought we to be moved by the greatness of this price, to comply with all his terms and conditions; and not so to remember the price, as to forget the end for which it was paid? As we *were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ* *, so therefore should the greatness of the price make us to glorify God, in our body and in our spirit, which are God's †. This is the use, which the apostles earnestly direct Christians to make, of our Saviour's merits. But they never teach us to think, that we shall be saved by his merits, after a life spent in continual disobedience to his moral laws. In short, the merits of Christ's sufferings are so great, that they will atone for the longest course of sins, provided we utterly forsake and leave them; but then they are of such a nature, as terribly to aggravate the guilt and punishment of those Christians, who will continue in their sins, because Christ is declared to be the propitiation of them.

The last mistake that I shall now consider concerns repentance. And in nothing do Christians more certainly contribute to their own ruin, than in those false notions, which too many entertain concerning the nature of *true* repentance. It may be therefore necessary to rectify such mistaken apprehensions,

* 1 Pet. 1. 18. † 1 Cor. 6. 20.

Disc. XXVIII. *as to faith and works, &c.* 57
fions, as may endanger the eternal happiness of men.

Repentance, considered with relation to professed Christians, as what will entitle them to God's favour, must suppose and imply these particulars. An hearty sorrow, for all past transgressions of God's laws. An unfeigned disposition of mind, to perform God's will better for the future. An actual avoiding and resisting those temptations to sin, by which we have been overpowered, and constantly practising the contrary virtue. As to the first, all are willing enough to admit that repentance does suppose and imply sorrow for sin; because a little sorrow, a short lived passion, will not cost much pains and trouble. This part of repentance the weakside of human nature is most pleased with. But then, there must be also a change of disposition within. *St. Paul* does not reckon sorrow a *part* of repentance, but repentance an *effect* of sorrow. *Godly sorrow* (of which I am speaking) *worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of* †. That is, such a disposition of mind, as manifestly shews what it produceth. If we are truly sorrowful, and heartily concerned for having offended God, this will certainly be accompanied with a sincere and hearty disposition to please him, and obey his will for the future. No sorrow can be sincere without this. But then this sorrow and change of mind, if real, will unavoidably produce in us a contrary behaviour to what caused this sorrow. Unless this is the effect thereof, it will only tend to encrease the condemnation of those who pretend to it. For *St. Paul's* words properly signify, such a repentance as implies in it no occasion for future repentance; a repentance that supposes such a conduct and behaviour of which there is no reason to repent. The truth of this we are ready enough to admit, when

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† 2 Cor. 7. 10.

it concerns ourselves. We only judge of other persons sincerity towards us, by their outward actions and behaviour. We never take the professions of others to be the true representation of their inward affection for us, unless we see the effects and fruits thereof in a suitable carriage. How then can we think ourselves sincere in our sorrow and inward repentance towards God, when we shew it not in our lives and conversation? A good tree is known by its fruit. This is that repentance, which can alone avail any professed Christian.

Thus have I considered some of those mistaken notions, by which many Christians deceive themselves in this affair. And from what has been observed, we may see the vanity and misery of those, who place their hopes of acceptance with God, upon the sorrow and grief that they at times conceive for their sins, and which some call repentance, because in our language, when we are sorry for our past conduct, we are said to repent of it.

We are all travellers to heaven, and repentance is the road thereto; the first step is sorrow for our sins. But he that stops at this sorrow, and rests contented with it, stops at the first step in his journey, and can never expect to arrive at his journey's end. The second step is a good disposition of mind to go forward; but he that stops without putting this in execution, is not likely to arrive at the end proposed. And yet this is another mistake of men, who suppose that a good disposition and resolution of mind is sufficient. But 'tis not going one or two steps, that will bring us to the end of our spiritual journey; for we must proceed as far as time and strength will give leave. Again, from what has been said, we may learn not to place any hopes in what is called a death-bed repentance. For this repentance, extorted from us
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by the prospect of death, is perhaps only a sorrow occasioned by our present fears; which is no more than the first steps to repentance, but is not compleat in all its parts. It is true, these are not ill signs. But it ought to be declared that sorrow and good words, are not the end of the gospel institution, but an holy life and conversation. Indeed, where a person had no calls to repentance and amendment before, and hardly knew what the gospel requires; if such an one is awakened by his danger, into serious enquiries about his salvation, and a great detestation of his former wicked life, some good may reasonably be hoped for. But as to professed Christians, who are constantly called to amendment, and yet daily shut their ears, spend all their time and health in sin and vice, and are only sorry for this when they can live no longer; all that can be said is, that this their sorrow, if sincere, is one step towards happiness. But to assert, that these are the Christians, whom God in his gospel hath declared he will accept, is to render vain all the threatnings of his Son, to place the sinner and the saint upon equal terms; to put all on a person's having a little longer sickness than his neighbour, and to undo the great design of reforming men's lives, the only end worthy of the Son of God's incarnation.

The result of the whole is this; since Almighty God hath plainly declared in his gospel, what he expects from sinners; I need not add how great a weakness, how extreme a folly it is, to have recourse to any flattering hopes of our own? Let us consult the gospel and not our own lusts or passions, as to what we are to hope for from God. Were not men immediately captivated to some vice, it would evidently appear to themselves, that God cannot be supposed to accept any thing from us, without a sincere amendment of what we know to be amiss in us. And yet such is the effect of our

own evil habits, and the prevalence of our beloved vices ; that we desire and hope to be accepted for some superficial circumstance, without a solid reformation of our lives. If under the law, God required men to *do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God* ; how much more ought we to do so under the gospel ? As we are Christians, we are not to be supposed wilful sinners. But if we have transgressed against the clearest light, God is so merciful as to allow a place of reconciliation to his favour upon our amendment. And is this so hard a condition ? Should we for this abuse the gospel to our own destruction ? Shall the goodness and long-suffering of God, instead of leading us to true repentance, only give us false ideas of it ? Shall we continue in sin, and pretend that sorrow for it is sufficient ? God forbid ! Let us not so abuse our Lord's indulgent kindness to us in the gospel, but let all who know what repentance is, live worthy of such repentance, as may give good hope for salvation.

To conclude ; if we will have our sins blotted out, we must repent and be converted, that is, actually turned from them. Let then all wilful, habitual sinners, who think of being saved by repentance, remember ; that the first step towards it, is sorrow for their sins. But it is only the first. The second is a disposition to amend their lives ; but there is no stopping here. This sorrow and disposition cannot be sincere, unless they shew themselves in good effects. There must be an actual entering upon, and progress made in a virtuous holy life, whilst God gives opportunity ; for without this, there is not the least security of happiness. And if any trust to other methods, they rely on *other terms*, than what are proposed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

DISCOURSE XXIX. Abp. Tillotson,

The wisdom of God in redeeming the world.

1 Cor. i. 24.

— *Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

ST. Paul in the seventeenth verse of this chapter tells us, that he had *preached the gospel*, not with human eloquence, not *in wisdom of words*, but with great plainness and simplicity, *lest the cross of Christ, should be made of none effect*. Indeed, his preaching was unaffectedly plain, and therefore the gospel did seem to many a foolish and ridiculous thing; *a crucified Saviour was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness*. The *Jews*, who expected a *Messiah*, that should come in great pomp and glory, to be a mighty temporal prince, disliked the news of a *crucified Christ*. The *Greeks*, and the philosophers, who expected some curious theories, adorned with eloquence, and delivered according to the exactest rules of art, derided this plain and simple relation of Christ and the gospel. But tho' this design of the gospel appeared silly and foolish to rash, inconsiderate, and prejudiced minds; yet to *them that are called*, and do *believe*, whether *Jews or Gentiles*, *Christ is the power and the wisdom of God*: That is, the way of our redemption by *Jesus Christ*, which the apostle preached, is an eminent instance of the *wisdom of God*. And this I shall prove by the general testimonies of scripture, and the nature of this design, by means of which it was accomplished.

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The light of nature will afford us no help in treating of this subject. The wisdom of the *creation* is manifest in *the things which are made*; *the heavens declare the glory of God's wisdom, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work*. The works of God declare the wisdom of the creator; but the sun, moon, and stars, do not preach the *gospel*. The wisdom of redemption is wisdom hid in a mystery, which none of the princes or philosophers of this world knew. The sharpest wits, the highest and most exalted understandings among the Heathens could say nothing of this. Here the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the prudent, are confounded; and we may say with the apostle, *where is the wise? where is the disputer of this world**? There is no natural light that discovers Christ; the wisemen cannot find him out, unless by a *star* appearing on purpose to lead and direct them to him: Therefore in this we can only depend upon divine revelation. "The gospel is called the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world, unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew. In whom we have redemption thro' his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, where-in he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. The manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord †." This work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, is so wonderful, that the angels desire to know and understand it.

But the wisdom of our redemption, will yet better appear, by enquiring more particularly into the nature of this design, and the means by which it was accomplished. It is a great instance of wisdom,

* 1 Cor. 1. 20.

† 1 Cor. 2. 7, 8.

Eph. 1. 7, 8. Eph. 3. 10, 11.

dom, to fit means to proper ends; and the more difficult that is, the greater wisdom is required to contrive and accomplish it. The wisdom of redemption will then fully appear, if we consider the case of fallen man, and what fit, proper, and suitable means, the wisdom of God hath devised for our recovery. The case of fallen man was very deplorable, both in respect of the misery and difficulty of it. His misery consisted, in that being made holy and upright by God, he by his own voluntary transgression, and wilful disobedience, fell from his original perfect state, into a corrupt, degenerate, and miserable condition; of which heaven and earth, and his own conscience bore witness. Man, by being a sinner, is not only deprived of the image of God, but is liable to his justice. This was his misery; and the difficulty of his case was such, that man could not recover and raise himself out of his own ruin, nor was any creature able to effect it; none but God only. And indeed, we have a merciful God, who doth not desire our ruin, nor delight in our destruction. But some will say, suppose his mercy to be never so willing to save us, will not his holiness, justice, and truth, check and restrain the inclinations of his goodness, and hinder the designs of his mercy? Is not sin contrary to the holy nature of God? Hath not he declared his infinite hatred of it; and threatened it with heavy and dreadful punishment? Hath he not said, *the sinner shall die*; that *he will not acquit the guilty*, nor, *let sin go unpunished*? Should he then, without any satisfaction to his offended justice, pardon the sinner, remit his punishment, and receive him to favour? Would this be agreeable to his holiness, justice, and truth? Would this become the wise governor of the world, who loves righteousness and order, and who is obliged by the essential rectitude of his nature, to hate and discountenance sin? So that here
seems

seems to be a conflict between the attributes and perfections of God. The mercy of God pities our misery, and would open paradise to us; but there is a *flaming sword* that keeps us out: The incensed justice of God that must be satisfied. So that if he takes vengeance of us, we are eternally ruined; and yet if he spares us, how shall justice and mercy meet together? How shall God at once express his love to the sinner, and his hatred to sin? This is the difficulty of our case, and which brings me to enquire, what means the wisdom of God made use of, to recover us out of this miserable state.

And the expedient which the wisdom of God devised to surmount these difficulties, and reconcile his mercy and justice, was, that the Son of God should undertake this work; that he should satisfy the offended justice of God, and repair the ruined nature of man. That he, being God and man together, should renew that friendly correspondence between God and us, which sin had interrupted. God's design in the redemption of man, was to recover him from a state of sin and eternal death, to a state of holiness and eternal life. The son of God therefore engaged in this design of our redemption, to satisfy the justice of God towards us, so as to purchase our deliverance from the wrath to come, and restore us to the image and favour of God; that being sanctified we might be made heirs of eternal life.

The person then designed for this work, was the *eternal Son of God*, who in respect of his infinite wisdom and power, the dignity and credit of his person, his dearness to his Father, and interest in him, was very fit to undertake this work, to mediate a reconciliation between God and man. And the fitness of the means whereby he was to accomplish it, will best appear by considering our Saviour's *humiliation* and *exaltation*, both which were very
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subservient to the design of our redemption. The *humiliation* of Christ consists of three principal parts, his *incarnation*, *life*, and *death*. His *incarnation* is set forth in scripture by several expressions; as his "being made flesh and dwelling among us; his "being made of the seed of *David* according to "the flesh; his being made of a woman; the "manifestation of God in the flesh; his taking "part of flesh and blood; his taking on him the "seed of *Abraham*, and being made like unto his "brethren; his coming in the flesh †." All which signify his taking upon him human nature, and being man as well as God. The eternal Son of God, in the fulness of time, took our nature, by assuming a real soul and body into an union with the divine nature. So that this person being really both God and man, was perfectly qualified for the work of our redemption; because this made him a fit mediator, to interpose and make up the breach between God and man. Being God and man, he was concerned for both parties, and interested in the honour of God, and the happiness of man, and engaged to be tender of both. And then his *incarnation* made him fit for *those* two offices, *prophet* and *priest*, which he was to perform in his *humiliation*. The office of a *prophet*, to teach us both by his doctrine and his life; by his doctrine, as being a *prophet raised up from among his brethren*; and his being in the likeness of man, made him more familiar to us. Should God speak to us, immediately by himself, we *could not hear him and live*. God condescends to us, and complies with the weakness of our nature, and *raiseth up a prophet from among our brethren*; whom we could hear. His being God, gave credit and authority to what he said; and he confirmed the truth of the doctrine

† John 1. 14. Rom. 1. 3. Gal. 4. 4.
1 Tim. 3. 16. Heb. 2. 14. 16, 17. 1 John 2. 2.

doctrine he taught by miracles. And he was fit to be our *priest*, because he *was taken from among men*; fit to suffer as being *man*, having a *body prepared* ||; and fit to *satisfy* by his sufferings for the sins of all *men*, as being *God*; which put an infinite dignity and value upon them. The sufferings of an *infinite person*, being equal to the offences done against an infinite God. Thus the *mercy* of God is exalted, without the diminution of his *justice*. And as his *incarnation* did qualify him for suffering, so did it fill him with compassion and a fellow-feeling for us; *wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren*, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted*.

And as his doctrine, so was his life an admirable means of bringing men to holiness and goodness. Intending to be very short on this head, I shall only take notice of that part of his life, respecting his public ministry; *he went about doing good*. The doctrine he preached was calculated to destroy sin and promote holiness; the great end and design of it was to advance righteousness, goodness, humility, patience, and self-denial; to make us mortify our sinful desires and brutish passions, to contemn and renounce this present world. A design the most proper to demolish the works of the devil. And to make way for the entertainment of his doctrine, the whole frame of his life, and all the circumstances of it, did greatly contribute. His life was the practice of his doctrine, and a clear comment upon it. The meanness of his condition was a great advantage to the doctrine of self-denial and contempt of the world. The *captain of our salvation*, that he might draw our affections from the world, and shew us
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|| Heb. 10. 5.

* Heb. 2. 17, 18.

how little the things of it are to be valued, would himself have no share in it, *for the Son of man had no where to lay his head* †. His mean circumstances were eminently for the advantage of his design. Had he not been stript of all worldly accommodations, he might have been suspected of worldly views and interest; nay, he was really *greater* for his meanness. *Aristotle* tells us, that the Heathens esteemed it true greatness, not to admire the pleasures, honours, and pomp of the world. And the evidences he gave of his divinity, in the wonderful things he did, rendered him considerable enough, and gained more reverence and authority to his doctrine, than his poverty brought contempt. Besides, the manner of his conversation was a great advantage to him; he was of a sweet, conversable, and obliging temper, which gained upon the people, and made him acceptable to them. The miracles he wrought confirmed his doctrine beyond all exception, as being a divine testimony, and setting the seal of God to the truth of it. And because many were blinded with prejudice, and tho' they did, yet would not *see* Christ; the *wisdom* of God did so order his miracles, as to make them win upon them, by being generally such as were beneficial. For he *healed all manner of diseases and maladies*, by this miraculous power, which did not only tend to confirm his doctrine, as they were miracles; but to make way for the entertainment of it, as they were benefits; and it was a plain demonstration that he intended to do them all possible good, since they might easily believe, that he who healed their bodies, would not harm their souls.

Lastly, his death did eminently contribute to this design of our redemption. The death of Christ did not only expiate the guilt of sin, and pacify conscience, by making plenary satisfaction to the
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divine justice; but also contributed to the killing of sin in us; for we know that *the old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we might not serve sin.* And God by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by being a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh †. The death of Christ proves sin to be a great evil, and condemns it; in that the impartial justice of God, did so severely punish it in his own Son, when he appeared in the person of a sinner. And this consideration should be a powerful argument for us to crucify sin; and to make us perfectly hate it, because so innocent and holy a person did suffer so cruel and ignominious a death for our sins. And,

The circumstances of Christ's sufferings are with admirable wisdom fitted for the conquering of sin and satan. Sin came by the woman; the seed of the woman suffers for sin, and by suffering conquers it. Sin began in the garden, and there our Saviour began his sufferings for sin. Sin came by a tree, and Christ bore the curse of it, by hanging on a tree, and crucifies it by his cross. And as he conquered sin, so he overcame Satan by his own arts. The devil found Christ in the likeness of man, and he judged him mortal, and his great design was to procure his death, and get him into his grave. Christ permits him to effect it, he lets him enter into Judas, he suffers the Jews to crucify and put him into his grave, and roll a great stone thereon. But here divine wisdom appears, in ruining the devil by his own design, ensnaring him in the works of his own hands; and by death destroys him who had the power of death, that is the devil ‡. Indeed the sufferings of Christ were, by the wise of the world, made the great objection against the wisdom of this dispensation. But tho' the cross of Christ was to
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† Rom. 6. 6. 8. 3. ‡ Heb. 2. 14.

the Greeks foolishness, yet the *wisest* of them had determined otherwise in general. *Plato* (in the second book of his *Commonwealth*) saith, "That if a man would be a perfect pattern of justice and righteousness, and be approved by God and men, he must be stript of all the things of this world; he must be poor and disgraced, be accounted a wicked and unjust man; he must be whipt, tormented, and crucified as a malefactor." Which seems a prophetic description of our Saviour's sufferings. And *Arian*, in his *Epist.* describing a man fit to reform the world, whom he calls the apostle, the messenger, the preacher, and minister of God, says, "He must be without house and harbour, and worldly accommodations; he must be armed with such patience for the greatest sufferings, as if he was a stone, and devoid of sense; he must be a spectacle of misery and contempt to the world." So that by the acknowledgment of these *two* wise Heathens, there was nothing in the sufferings of Christ, unbecoming the *wisdom* of God, or unsuitable to the end and design of Christ's coming into the world. But a further end there was in it, the *satisfying of divine justice*.

I now proceed to consider our Saviour's *exaltation*; the several parts of which, namely his *resurrection*, *ascension*, and *sitting at the right-hand of God*, were eminent instances of God's wisdom, and very subservient to the carrying on of this design.

The resurrection of Christ is the great confirmation of all that truth he delivered; he being *declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead* *. This great *miracle* of his *resurrection* from the dead, did determine the controversy, and put it out of all doubt and question that he was the Son of God. And his *ascension* and *sitting on the right-hand of God*, gives us the assurance

* Rom. i. 4.

rance of a blessed immortality, and is a demonstration of a life to come, and a pledge of everlasting glory and happiness. And can any thing tend more to the encouragement of obedience, and to make us dead to the pleasures and enjoyments of this life, than the assurance of eternal felicity? And as to the consequences of his *exaltation*, they also do eminently conduce to our recovery; such as the sending the Holy Ghost, to *lead us into all truth*, to sanctify, assist, and comfort us, under the greatest troubles and afflictions: as also the powerful *intercession* of Christ, on our behalf, and his return to judgment; the expectation whereof is the great argument to repentance, and holiness of life. ‘God now commands all men, every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness; by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead *.’ Thus I have endeavoured to prove, that the *redemption of man by Jesus Christ*, is a design of admirable *wisdom*. The remaining part of my discourse shall be to evince the unreasonableness of unbelief, and the folly of impenitency.

As to the unreasonableness of unbelief; the gospel reveals to us the wise counsel and dispensation of God for our redemption; and those who disbelieve the gospel, *reject the counsel of God against themselves* †. The gospel reveals to us a design so reasonable and full of wisdom, that none can disbelieve it, but persons desperate and devoted to ruin. ‘The cross of Christ is to them that perish, foolishness; and if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image

* Acts 17. 30, 31. † Luke 7. 30.

‘image of God, should shine upon them. ||’ The gospel carries so much light and evidence in it, that it cannot be hid from any, but such whose eyes are blinded by the devil and their lusts. He that will duly weigh and consider things, and look narrowly into this *wise dispensation* of God, shall find nothing to object against it, but therein discover the greatest motives and inducements to believe. If a thing is reasonable and tends to our advantage, we are ready enough to believe it; now this *wise dispensation* of God, is not only reasonable in itself, but beneficial to us; it does at once highly gratify our understandings, and satisfy our interest. Why then should we not believe and entertain it?

The design of the gospel is *reasonable*, and gratifies our understandings. In this respect the gospel hath advantages, far exceeding any other religion. The end of all religion is to advance piety, holiness, and real goodness among men; and the more any religion promotes these, the more reasonable it is. Now the great incitements and arguments to piety, are the excellency and perfection of the divine nature; fear of punishments; and hopes of pardon and rewards. And the gospel represents all these to the greatest advantage; especially those perfections of God, which tend most to the promotion of piety, and the love of God in us; his *justice*, and his *mercy*. The gospel represents his *justice*, as inflexible and inexorable, in the punishment of sin; and the impartiality of the divine justice fully appears in this dispensation, by God’s pardoning the sinner, and punishing sin so severely in his own son, who was the surety. And what could more tend to discountenance sin, and convince us of the great evil thereof? The gospel also displays the mercy of God. For this dispensation is a sufficient evidence of the mercy, goodness, and love of God, in send-
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ing his son to die for sinners, and by saving us thro' the sacrifice of him; 'God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten son for us; and he commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were sinners Christ died for us *.' And again, God sent his only begotten son into the world, that we might live thro' him, and made him, to be the propitiation for our sins †.' And this representation, which the gospel makes of God's mercy and love, should surely melt our hearts into love to God, for his amazing goodness to us.

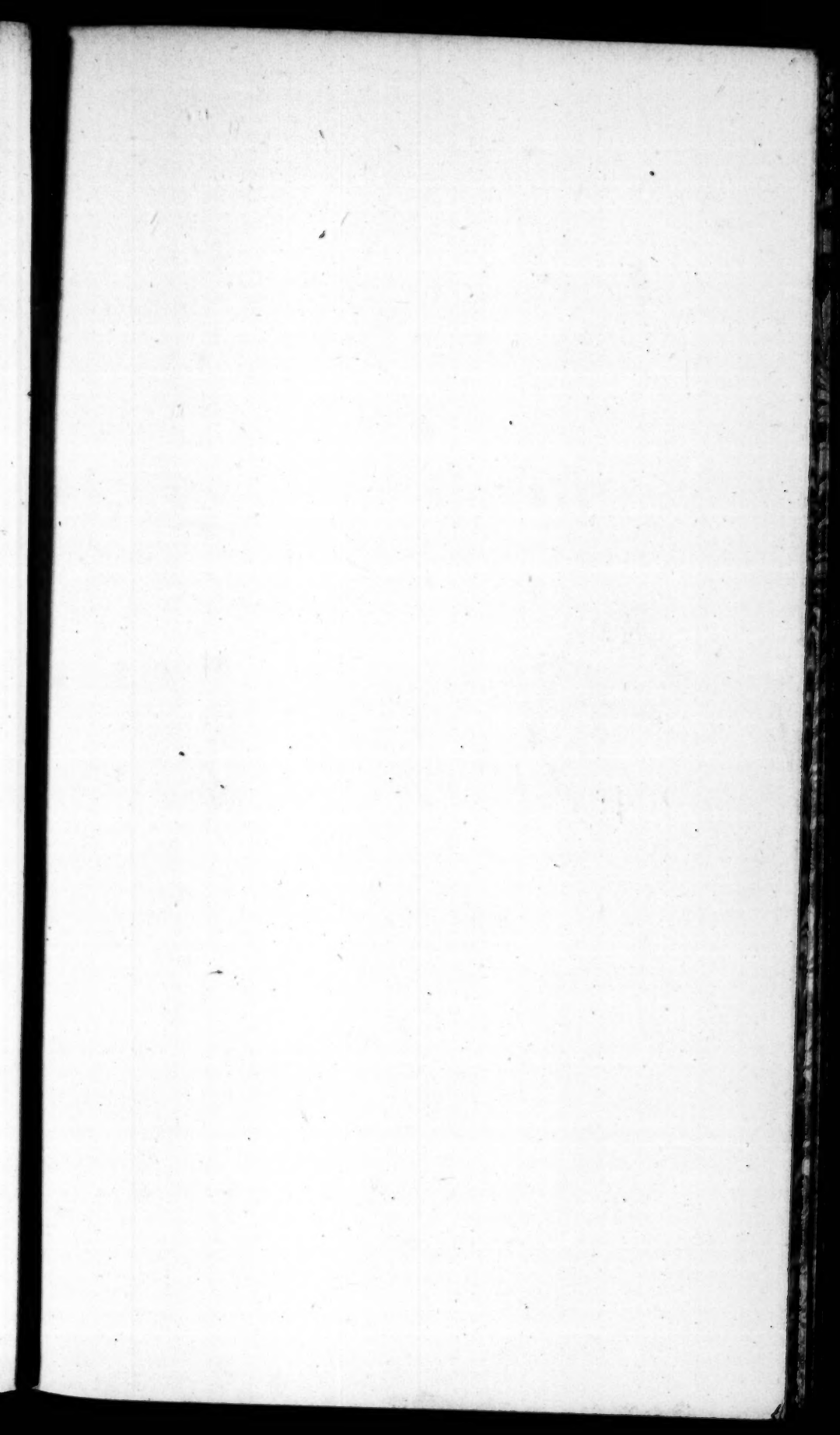
As to fear of punishment, another argument to piety; in this the gospel is very express, having revealed to us, the misery of those who continue in their sins. It hath made clear and terrible discoveries of those torments, which attended sinners in another world, and hath opened to us the dreadful-ness of God's wrath; so that now, under the gospel, *hell is naked before us, and destruction hath no covering*: And what makes the gospel so powerful an engine to destroy sin, is, that therein *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men* ||. And the hopes of pardon and reward being added to the former, renders the gospel the most powerful instrument to take men off from sin, and engage them to holiness, that infinite wisdom could contrive. The means to deter men from sin, when once terrified with the fear of vengeance, are hopes of pardon and mercy; and the way to encourage obedience for the future, is hope of reward. To induce us to retreat from sin, the gospel promises pardon, and indemnity to us; and as a motive to holiness, the gospel opens heaven to us, and sets before us everlasting glory and happiness, giving us the greatest assurance of obtaining it,

* John 3. 16.

Rom. 5. 8.

† 1 John 4. 9.

|| Rom. 1. 18.



When a good man has been thus employing some part of the morning, in fitting himself to appear before God, then he ought to go to the house of prayer, remembering that the scriptures join these two together. *Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary.* We ought to consider the prayers and praises of the church, as the publick services which we offer up to God, and in which we must remember, what a terrible condemnation they fall under, who *draw near to God, with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, when their minds and hearts are far from him* *. We should therefore join our hearts with our lips in every part of the worship. And when we pronounce the confession of sins, we must confess our secret ones to God; when the absolution is read, we ought most humbly to beg our share therein; when the psalms and hymns are repeated, we should raise up our souls, and rejoice in God, for the great blessings commemorated in them; while the lessons are reading, we ought to observe what particular instructions, reproof or consolation arises to us, from any part of them; in the collects, and chiefly the litany, we should pour out our hearts to God, for the graces and blessings which we ask of him; in the thanksgiving we ought to join in an humble acknowledgment of those mercies, which we have particularly met with from God. When we make confession with our mouths of our faith, we must be sure to join with it the belief of our hearts; otherwise we lye to God, when we say we believe that to which our hearts do not consent. While the commandments are repeated, we ought to remember both our former sins, and the infirmities of our nature, together with the temptations to which we are exposed, so shall we have a true sense of

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* Mat. 15. 8.



our wants, both of *mercy and of grace to help in time of need* †.

When we hear sermons we ought particularly to observe, what parts of scripture are thereby rendered more intelligible to us, that so we may afterwards read these with more profit. We ought also to observe what sins are reprov'd in them, what duties are recommended, what resolutions of doubts, or directions are given, wherein we are more immediately concerned, that so we may lay them up in our hearts, and afterwards reflect upon them. We are not to hear sermons, as men who intend only to censure them, but as becomes those who are resolved to be the better for them; and when we get home we are to consider frequently in our thoughts, such passages in them, as are likely to have a good effect on us, *in order to our growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* *. If these rules ought to be minded by us every Lord's day, much more should it be on days of communion; in which we are called to a more immediate commemoration of the death and sufferings of our Saviour, and to renew our vows to him. As then we again dedicate ourselves to him, and receive the fullest pledges of his love, we must awaken our minds to a greater seriousness, to more contrition for our sins, to more earnestness in our prayers, to greater firmness in our resolutions, to a higher fervour of charity, in our intercessions for others, to a fuller assurance of faith, and more elevated acts of praise and thanksgiving to God, for all his mercies. But above all, for that astonishing effect of his love to mankind, in sending his son into the world to save sinners; in giving him to die for our sins, raising him again from the dead, and crowning him with glory and honour. Thus we ought to behave ourselves in the house of God, in all the
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† Heb. 4. 16.

* 2 Pet. 3. 18.

Disc. XXXIV. *The fourth commandment.* 147

several parts of the public worship; nor ought we to think it too hard a burthen to return a second time to evening prayer, and sermon; we should rather rejoice at our going often to *the house of God together* ||. For if we despise these solemn assemblies, we may thereby provoke God to visit us with a famine, not of *bread, or of water*, but of *hearing the word of the Lord* †.

When the public worship is ended, every one of us ought for some time, to recollect his thoughts, and renew his vows and good resolutions; and remembering what we have learned, either from the word of God, or the sermon, to raise in our minds such a sense of things, as is agreeable thereunto. Masters of families ought also to bring their families together to prayer, to the reading some portions of scripture, and of other good books; and we ought to edify and admonish one another, by singing of psalms, and serious godly discourses. It is also an act of charity, highly becoming this day, to *visit the sick, the widows and the fatherless in their affliction*, to comfort the afflicted, to reconcile differences between neighbours, and to do such other acts of love and kindness, without disturbing too much our own devotion, as may tend to their good; by which, peace, kindness, and love may be preserved among friends, neighbours, and acquaintance. For by so doing, we serve God, and advance the true ends, as well as the honour of religion.

Thus I have shewn, what are the particular duties of keeping the sabbath; by which we may perceive how generally God is dishonoured on this day; the due observation whereof, is one chief means, that God hath appointed to promote and encrease religion in the world. And the neglect, or prophaning of it, is one great occasion of that

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|| Psal. 122. 1.

† Amos 8. 11.

forgetfulness of God, that immorality and impiety, which so much abounds. For if men on this day, do not regard their souls, and the concerns of religion, when they are at leisure, and not engaged about their ordinary affairs; how is it to be expected, they should have much thoughts of religion, when their minds are distracted with their temporal concerns, and their bodies fatigued with labour. We ought then to think it one of the greatest blessings to a nation, that God gives them his sabbaths; and those who despise this day, and wish it was gone, as imagining it too great an interruption to their affairs, may provoke God to shut them out of his rest, even that rest, or *keeping of the sabbath, which remains for the people of God* †.

Let us then consider well of how much importance our immortal souls are. For, *what shall it profit us, if we gain the whole world, and lose our own souls* *. Shall we labour all the week, for our bodies, which are perishing, and yet think it too much to dedicate one day in seven, to the care of our souls that are to live for all eternity? let us consider what a miserable thing it is to be ignorant of our duty, in the midst of so much light and knowledge as we enjoy; and which may be easily acquired by any who will spend but a few hours once a week, to learn instruction. If we will chuse a wilful ignorance, we may provoke God to give us up to that darkness, in which some delight. But if we will hearken to his voice, and apply ourselves to the hearing and learning of his laws, he will make us *to learn wisdom*, in the inward part; he will by the assistance of his grace, *so open our eyes, that we may behold the wonders of his law; and so quicken our hearts, that we may run the ways of his commandments; he will guide us here with his counsel, and afterwards receive us to glory* †.

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† Heb. 4.9. * Mat. 16. 26. † Psal. 119. 18 32. 73. 24.

DISCOURSE XXXV. Bp. Hopkins.

The fifth commandment.

Exodus 20. 12.

Honour thy father, and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

AS there is nothing wherein the truth and power of godliness, and the life of religion, is more concerned, than in a conscientious performance of relative duties, because they daily occur; so there is no subject more ungrateful to men, than to be reminded of these duties, and reproved for the neglect of them: however, the frequent occasion we have to practise them, renders it necessary to consider how to perform them.

I begin with the honour and reverence that is due from children to their parents. Reverence to parents consists in having a respectful love for, and an awful fear to offend them: not such a fear as terrifies, for that is slavish and tormenting; but an obliging fear that will create esteem and veneration; that will engage us to observe their commands, and refrain from whatever is displeasing to them. This reverence should be expressed in our words and actions. Our expressions must be full of respect and honor, giving them such titles as their quality and condition require; our words, in answering them, should be few, humble and submissive. It is but reasonable we should give them the most obliging language, who first taught and instructed us to speak. We must also reverence them with a decent,

modest, and respectful bodily behaviour, shewing all external signs of honour. *Joseph*, tho' highly exalted in the court of *Pharaoh*, when he brought his sons to receive the blessing of *Jacob* his father, bowed himself with his face to the earth*. All four, morose, and unseemly looks towards a parent is threatned to be severely punished. *The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it †.*

But as we must honour them with reverence, so especially with obedience; without which all external respect is meer formality. *Children obey your parents in all things, for that is well pleasing to God ‡.* We are obliged to pay them both active and passive obedience. Active, in observing all their commands, that are not contrary to the laws of God; and passive, in suffering their anger and resentment, with all patience and submission, when they require to be performed, what is sinful; rather than to disobey God ||. If they chasten and correct us for their own pleasure, yet we are to reverence them, to bear with their infirmities, to conceal and not expose their weakness to others. And if they are reduced to poverty, we are obliged liberally to assist them, according to our ability; it being a sin the most unnatural, for children that can relieve their necessitous parents, to suffer them who were the cause and authors of their life, to want a livelihood and comfortable subsistence. We must also honour our parents, by regarding their good instructions, and imitating their pious examples. *My son, says Solomon, keep thy father's commandments, and forsake not the law of thy mother.* 'Till we are set free by their consent, we ought not to enter into the state of marriage, without their knowledge

* Genesis 48. 12. † Prov. 30. 17. ‡ Col. 3. 20.

|| Heb. 12. 9, 10.

knowledge and approbation. If we seriously consider that we owe to our parents our lives, education, and many other benefits, we should never think any thing too much to do for them. Oh? the cares, anxious thoughts, and perplexing fears, which our parents have continually had for our welfare. And can we so return their love and tenderness, as to despise their persons, or become stubborn and disobedient? If we have any ingenuity in our nature, or that the principles of reason and equity are not quite extinguished in us, we should requite the love and solicitude which our parents have shewn us, in the most ample and acceptable manner, that is possible. If any by disobedience have brought down the grey hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave, let such seriously consider, what an unnatural sin they are guilty of: and since they cannot beg pardon of their parents, let them ask it of God, the great and universal father of all; and beseech him, not to revenge their disobedience, by the undutifulness of their own children.

As to the duty of parents to their children, that respects either their temporal or spiritual good. The former consists in protecting and providing for their bodies; as the other does for their souls. This the law of nature requires. In brute beasts there is so strong a parental affection, as that they will expose their lives to the greatest hazard, for the preservation and defence of their young. And if the instinct and impulse of nature is so powerful in irrational creatures, how much more should it prevail on us, who have reason given us on purpose to perfect nature? Their weakness and impotency demand from us our care and protection. To how many diseases and dangers are their feeble infancy exposed? and their growing childhood, thro' want of care and experience, daily leads them into many more. Parents therefore are to guard and defend

them from every threatned injury. And if it is inhuman for parents to neglect the care of their children, much more wicked and diabolical is it to hurt or destroy them. And yet this is the too common practice of many wretches, who to conceal their shame, either abandon or murder their innocent babes. And as parents are to protect their children from incident evils, so are they to provide necessities and conveniencies for them, according to the station, in which providence hath placed them: even infidels and heathens are taught by the light and law of nature to make provision for their own*. And if we cannot leave them a sufficiency to subsist on, we should fix them to some business or employ, by which thro' God's blessing they may procure a livelihood. *Children are not to lay up for the parents, but parents for children*†. And we ought to place them to such business, as is most agreeable to their genius and inclination; otherwise they will be uneasy all their days. The duty of parents to their children relating to spirituals, consists in taking care of their souls, and promoting their eternal happiness. Their first concern is to have them baptised, and admitted members of Christ's church; and whoever neglects this, is highly culpable, and acts very injuriously by their children. They are afterwards to instruct, admonish, and educate them in the knowledge and fear of God‡. Would parents, bring them to the love of piety and virtue, whilst their minds are flexible, and before they are filled with vanity, the next generation would not be so debauched in their youth, nor obdurate in old age, as is every where now too visible and apparent. Such instructions should be done in an easy familiar way, by catechising and instructing them

* 1 Tim. 5. 8.

† 2 Cor. 12. 14.

‡ Ephes. 6. 4.

them, in the grounds and principles of the Christian religion.

A good example is another duty of parents. If we blaspheme the name of God, by swearing and cursing, abuse ourselves or others by riot and intemperance, how can we expect our children should revere that dreadful name we profane, and love that sobriety and temperance we recommend, but do not practise? What effect can words have, when we contradict them in our actions? If our children improve in wickedness, by our ill examples, what will our exhortations and admonitions avail, unless to reproach ourselves, and encrease our own condemnation? But if parents will with tenderness and affection instruct their children in the ways of virtue and religion, and confirm them in the practice thereof by their own good example, none would behave undutifully, or live wickedly, but such as are in their nature deplorably vicious. However, if neither instruction, nor good example will prevail, then correction and discipline become a necessary duty; tho' to inflict it, may be as uneasy to the parent as the child. Reason and not passion should prescribe the measure of punishment. Immoderate correction does not amend and reform children, but either exasperates, and makes them more stubborn, or else dispirits and stupifies them. *Fathers should not provoke their children to anger, lest they be discouraged* *. But where age and decency permit, the severity of discipline is sometimes necessary, if used with prudence. *He that spareth the rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chastens him betimes* †. Lastly, parents are to offer up fervent and earnest prayers to God for their children; beseeching him to own and provide for them, to make them heirs of glory, and coheirs with *Jesus Christ*. That he would give them a convenient

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portion

* Col. 3. 21.

† Prov. 13. 24.

portion of temporal good things, whereby they may be enabled to serve him with greater chearfulness; also to bestow on them spiritual blessings, and at last to bring them to eternal glory.

As for supreme magistrates, their duty is to establish the true worship and service of God, to reform all corruptions and abuses, to distribute justice impartially, to maintain the cause of the poor and oppressed, and restrain the insolence of proud oppressors. Governors ought to be exemplary for virtue and piety, because the eyes of their subjects are upon them. They ought to fear God above all, to seek his honour and glory, to be prudent in their designs, faithful in their promises, wise in their counsels, observant of the laws, careful of their subjects welfare, merciful to the poor, kind to the good, terrible to the evil, and just towards all; ever remembering they are men who must give an account unto God of the trust he hath reposed in them. The duties of subjects towards princes and magistrates are honour, obedience, and prayer to God for them. We must honour and reverence them in our thoughts and words; speaking what good we know, and prudently concealing their vices and infirmities. To publish the faults of governors can only tend to alienate the affections, and relax the obedience of subjects. Much more wicked is it, to falsely calumniate them by reviling whispers, or suspicious intimations, and to insinuate into the minds of the people sad fears and apprehensions of dangers. All which makes their subjects to despise if not hate them. We ought to honour them by contributing chearfully out of our substance, when the necessities of affairs require it. Obedience is another duty we owe them: We are commanded to be *subject to the higher powers, to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors as sent by him.*
For

For the powers that be, are ordained of God *. Fer-
 vent and earnest prayers for our governors is also a
 great duty of subjects. *Let supplications, prayers,*
intercessions and giving thanks be made for all men,
especially for kings and all in authority †. A crown is
 a heavy, tho' glittering ornament, and the welfare
 of thousands depends on the prudent counsels of a
 prince. The cares and burdens of government are
 weighty and constant; we ought therefore earnestly
 to pray, that magistrates may be endued with suf-
 ficient abilities to discharge their high and important
 office, to God's glory and their subjects happiness.

The duties of husbands to their wives are to love,
 provide for, and instruct them; to act with ten-
 derness, respect and prudence towards them: Love
 adorns all relations, and is the foundation of this.
 Tho' want of love will not dissolve the band of mar-
 riage, yet it destroys the comforts of a married
 state. A wife is the chiefest object of our love,
 even above parents, children, and friends. We
 must *leave father and mother for our wife*. We must
love our wives as ourselves, be as careful and tender
 of their good as our own, and resent any injury
 done to them, the same as if offered to us; they
 two being but one flesh. So that we are to love our
 wives, with as much tenderness and natural affec-
 tion as we do ourselves: Nay, husbands must love
 their wives, as Christ did the church; which was
 better than he did his own life, for he shed his most
 precious blood for her. We are to love our wives
 as Christ loved his church, by bearing with and for-
 giving their weaknesses, by being willing to submit
 to many inconveniencies for their sakes, by inter-
 posing between them and any danger, and by pro-
 moting their spiritual good and benefit. A husband
 is to provide for his wife, to nourish and cherish
 her, to impart to her, according to his ability, what

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her

* Rom. 13. 1. † 1 Pet. 2. 13. † 1 Tim. 2. 1.

her occasions require. He ought not to spend in riot and excess among lewd and wicked companions, what should go towards her support and maintenance. If a man provides not for his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel †. As the husband is the head of the wife, so is he the fountain of knowledge and wisdom, and therefore should instruct, advise and direct her, in all emergencies, especially in her duty to God. Indeed, where the wife is blessed with greater prudence and knowledge than the husband, he then ought to submit to her advice, tho' not to her authority; but this she must tender him with all modesty, respect, and submission. The husband is also to be tender and mild to his wife, and not to torment her by provoking words or actions. If the wife carefully performs her duty, she ought to be treated with love and kindness; to receive praise and commendation. Her failings should be rebuked with meekness, and so as to discover more of sorrow than anger. Perpetual quarrels embitter the comforts of life, and hinder each from performing their respective duties. Where contention between man and wife reigns, business is neglected and ruin ensues; and nothing is regarded but how to quarrel and rail at one another. Respect and honour is due unto the wife, as being the weaker vessel; a husband is not to be observant to her humour, for that will dishonour him; nor is she to be a slave to him, for that would dishonour her; but she ought to be treated as a kind and dear companion. Lastly, a husband must manage his authority with prudence, not with rigour and violence: The best way to preserve his authority is, by discretion, sobriety, and an exemplary good life; this will produce a reverent esteem and veneration from the wife and family; but a humourfome lightness or severity, will

expose

expose men to the contempt of both. He that will not reverence himself, will not be revered by others; but where there is a mixture of prudence and purity, these will make a man truly awful, and induce the wife and family to esteem and imitate him.

The duties of wives to their husbands, are subjection and obedience, respect and reverence. Wives are to *submit unto their husbands, as unto the Lord.* As the church is subject to Christ, so must wives be subject to their husbands in every thing ||. *The head of the woman is the man, for the woman is of the man. The man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man* *. Man was prior to the woman in the creation, and is therefore superior in nature. *A woman is not to usurp authority over the man, for Adam was first formed, and then Eve* †. And the Apostle directs wives to be *discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good and obedient to their husbands.* Another duty is respect and reverence: *Let the wife reverence her husband* †. As he is her head and superior by God's appointment, she ought to reverence him with fear; not a servile and slavish, but an awful and loving fear. She should endeavour to frame her affections and outward behaviour agreeable to the inclinations of her husband's; to rejoice when he is pleased, to be uneasy when he is offended. She ought to be helpful and assisting to him in all things; to his soul, by promoting religion and piety in him; to his body, by expressing due care and tenderness; to his good name, by defending his reputation from any injurious slanders; to his estate, by a prudent and frugal management of all his domestic concerns. She is not to dispose of any part of his estate contrary to his mind and consent; her proper office being to govern

|| Ephes. 5. 22. 24. * 1 Cor. 11. 3. 8.
† 1 Tim. 2. 12, 13. Titus 2. 5. Ephes. 5. 33.

govern the family with industry, care, and fidelity. She is to be adorned with a meek and quiet spirit, with sobriety, modesty, and good works. Her countenance, gesture, and words should be such, as to express the inward calmness and serenity of her mind. Imperious, clamorous, and turbulent women are a torment to themselves and their husbands. There are also mutual duties to be performed by each; such as prayer, prudence in governing their families, discreet education of children, mutual love, and bearing with each others infirmities.

The duties of servants to masters are obedience, reverential fear, diligence, honesty, and veracity. Their obedience is required in all things not contrary to the law of God: *Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh* †. Should the commands of masters be impertinent, imperious, or tyrannical, yet servants are no more exempted from obedience, than masters shall be from punishment, for requiring unreasonable things. Servants are also to suffer patiently the reproofs and corrections of their masters, *without answering again* ‖, or murmuring. A quiet, silent submission is required, even when the servant hath given no just cause for being rebuked, but that it proceeds from the unprovoked rage and passion of a master. The apostles command is, *servants be subject to your own masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; if a man for conscience towards God suffers wrongfully, and takes it patiently, this is praiseworthy, and acceptable to God. But if when we are buffeted for our faults, we take it patiently, what room for glory in this* *. Indeed, of all things belonging to the duty of a servant, this is the most difficult, and nothing can sweeten and make it tolerable,

† Col. 3: 22. ‖ Titus 2. 9. * 1 Pet. 2. 18, 19, 20.

lerable, but a sense of duty and the expectation of a reward from God. Reverential fear of masters is another duty of servants, who are commanded *to be subject to their masters with all fear*. This fear is to be expressed in their words and actions: In their words, by forbearing all irreverent, muttering, and indecent expressions; by giving such respectful titles as their place and station require; by speaking well of them, if they can, with truth; or otherwise to be silent, and conceal their infirmities: In their actions, by a modest and respectful behaviour, by observing their commands, and doing what they think will be pleasing and acceptable to them. Diligence is another duty: He is not a faithful servant who is slothful and negligent, for if he doth not use his strength and time in his master's service, he is a thief and robs him of so much advantage. Servants are also to be just, faithful, and honest, not to defraud their masters of the least thing, but to serve them with fidelity and integrity *. Many have been reduced and ruined by the unfaithfulness and carelessness of servants, either stealing from them, or prodigally wasting their properties. Truth and veracity is another duty: Lying is a sin very odious to God, and most detestable to men. Servants are as the hands and eyes of masters, and ought to report nothing but what is true. Lying is the effect of cowardice, of a base slavish fear. Lastly, servants are to serve their masters with goodwill and singleness of heart; not as men-pleasers, only with eye-service, who are no longer diligent than their masters are present; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart †. Servants are to have respect not so much unto men as unto God; and to serve well, because God hath commanded it. Let their service be never so mean, painful, and laborious, yet if they perform it out
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* Titus 2. 9, 10.

† Ephes. 6. 5, 6.

of conscience to God's command; he esteems it as done to himself, and will hereafter bountifully reward them. And this is a great encouragement for servants to persevere in well-doing.

As to masters, their first duty is a prudent care in the choice of servants. This is a concern of great moment, on which the comfort and happiness, or the trouble and misery of a family doth much depend. The qualifications of a servant are, ability to discharge the duties of his place, an upright conscience, and piety towards God: The last is of great importance, tho' too little regarded; for few enquire about their servants principles in religion, but chuse them, as we do beasts of burden, the most strong and able. But this is very imprudent and sinful. Masters should never think servants fit for their service, unless they are careful to worship that God, whom both are bound to serve and obey. Wicked servants will corrupt a whole family; their lewd examples will soon tempt others to be as bad as themselves. To this may be imputed that general profaneness so prevalent in most families, especially where there are numerous servants. Children by conversing with such, here imbibe the first rudiments of vice; learn the first syllables of oaths, curses, and obscenity; and who, for their easy docility and ready aptness therein, are applauded by these impious wretches. Such servants are the pests of mankind, as they corrupt those in their youth, who may afterwards have an influence on the state and commonwealth; and thereby render them a shame to their families, and a curse to the kingdom. For where servants are wicked, children are more influenced by their flattery and examples, than the authority and command of parents. It is therefore the wisdom and concern of masters to chuse such servants as know their duty, and make conscience of performing it; in whose integrity

integrity and fidelity they may repose themselves in safety. Another duty of masters is to govern their servants with prudence, and to make a reasonable provision for them. A master's demeanor should be grave and awful, and his very countenance beget reverence. If a master's behaviour is mean and indiscreet; servants will grow familiar and contemptuous: Not that masters are to command with rigour, or to give ill and reviling language, for that will discourage servants, and make them hate their place; but there should be such a mixture of mildness with gravity, of love with authority, as that the servant should be both compelled and inclined to obedience. Power may force submission, but only reason and gravity can render masters venerable. The commands of masters should be lawful, for servants have a supreme lord and master in heaven, whom they must fear and obey. A servant is obliged to work, but not to lye, steal, or cheat for a master; they must *obey God rather than men*. As to correction, prudence must be the measure of what is fit, according to their age, temper, and the nature of the offence. It should be inflicted for reformation and amendment, and not out of passion and revenge; reproof is generally the best discipline.

Another duty of a master, is to provide for the bodies and souls of servants. He is obliged to supply them with all things necessary. *Masters are to give unto their servants what is just and equal* †. To detain from them the reward of their labour as covenanted and agreed for, is a crying and provoking sin ‡. The care of their souls is also the master's concern. For he is priest and prophet in his own house, as well as lord and king. He is to instruct his family in religion, to inform their ignorance, excite them to serve God, to pray with and for them, to direct them in the way to heaven, and,
above

† Col. 4. 1. ‡ Deut. 24. 14. Jam. 5. 4.

above all, to set before them a holy, pious example. Masters should remember, that as their servants have immortal souls, so God hath entrusted the care thereof to them. Masters should instruct the ignorant, reduce the erroneous, rebuke the disobedient, discard the incorrigible and audacious; and more especially require their servants religiously to observe the Lord's day, in the due observance of which, a great part of the life of religion consists. — Thus have I considered the mutual duties of these several relations; and it is necessary to observe, as a general rule, that if one party omits to discharge his duty, this is no excuse for the other. Should a father be careless and cruel, yet the child's duty still remains; should a master be tyrannical and severe, yet a servant is to reverence, fear, and obey him; and so of other relations.

To the precept in this commandment, *honour thy father and mother*, is added as a motive and encouragement, the promise of long life. Indeed this promise was made to the Jews, and concerned the land of *Canaan*, which was a type of our enjoying the felicity of heaven, as a reward for our observing the laws of God. For, as the apostle says, *godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promises of this life, and that which is to come. He that desires to live, and loveth many days, let him depart from evil and do good* ||. But in all promises of temporal blessings, a condition is implied, that they shall only be fulfilled, if they promote our eternal happiness; and therefore God doth often in mercy abridge this promise, by taking us from the world, lest it should take us from him.

|| Psal. 34. 12, 13.

DISCOURSE XXXVI. *Lupton.*

The sixth commandment.

*Exod. 20. 13.**Thou shalt not kill.*

THE natural impressions and obligations of moral duty, which immediately relate to the preservation of human life, are such strong guards to secure it, that nothing surely but a very powerful temptation, can ever break thro' them. Other sins more easily prevail over us, because they are agreeable and pleasing to our corrupt inclinations; but, corrupted as our nature is, there is something so shocking in the sin of murder, that a man must offer the utmost violence to his own natural disposition, before he can prevail with himself to destroy his own, or his neighbour's life. And lest any thing should be wanting, to render these strong bonds of duty still more inviolable, God hath been pleased to confirm and enforce the voice of *nature* by this express revealed law, *thou shalt not kill* *. In discoursing on these words, it will be necessary to adjust the latitude and extent of the *commandment*, and then to represent the guilt and danger which men incur by transgressing it.

As there are some instances of murder which are not universally allowed to be such, but are often palliated under various pretences and false colours of vindication; so there are some cases where-

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* *Exod. 20. 13.*

in one may violently take away the life of another, without violating this command. The lawfulness of this, in the case of self-preservation, is so certain and obvious, that it can scarce admit of any mistake, so long as this necessary caution is observed, that a man should not on every little suspicion or appearance of danger, presently invade his neighbour's life, tho' he may innocently do it; but only when the danger is so manifest, that he must unavoidably, either give, or receive, the fatal stroke. The lawfulness of war, on some occasions; and under certain restrictions, is also plainly warranted by the authority of holy scripture ||, as well as by the nature and reason of things, the situation and circumstances of human affairs; it being often impossible for states and kingdom to support their just rights, or even preserve themselves or their allies from utter ruin, by any other means than war. Magistrates are likewise invested with a just authority to inflict capital punishments on offenders, by cutting off the corrupted members of the body politic, for the preservation and benefit of the whole society. The innocence of that person also is abundantly clear, who thro' ignorance or unavoidable accidents, deprives another of life. For an action which has no foundation in the will and intention of the agent, is not properly a moral action, and consequently cannot be criminal. And therefore under the Mosaical dispensation, there was a sanctuary provided by divine appointment, for every one who was so innocently unfortunate, as to kill his neighbour ignorantly and at unawares, lest the avenger of blood should pursue and slay him, before his innocence could be sufficiently cleared †.

So

|| Deut. 20. 4. 1 Sam. 15. 2, 3.
 † Exod. 21. 13.

So that whoever knowingly and designedly, (but not ignorantly or accidentally) without any necessity, arising from any imminent and unavoidable danger of his own destruction, does take away or invade his neighbour's life, is guilty of the sin forbidden in this commandment. And this imputation of murder properly falls on them who thus deprive their neighbour of life, either by open assault and violence, by stratagem and secret contrivance, by shedding his blood themselves, or engaging others to embrace their hands in the murder; either by acting as principals or accessaries, by command or persuasion, by threatening or encouragement, by direct concert and consultation, or by suggestion; either by bearing false witness against him themselves, or by suborning others; or by any instruments, means, or methods, which are not allowed by divine authority.

And from hence it likewise follows, that every person, who knowingly and wilfully destroys his own life, is guilty of murder. For he has no authority to become the instrument or cause of his own death. We are not the proprietors of our lives, and therefore may not dispose of them at pleasure. God who gave them hath the only right to take them away: So that whoever offers violence to his own life, manifestly invades the prerogative, and usurps the right and authority of God. *Duels* also are direct violations of this commandment; being to be ranked in the number of those violent attempts on human life, which are not allowed by divine authority: and therefore the guilt of murder is chargeable on those who engage in them. The liberty allowed to a private man of destroying his neighbour's life, is both by *natural* and *revealed* law, solely confined to the case of *self-preservation*; but that plea is utterly foreign to the condition and
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circumstances of him, who formally gives or accepts a *challenge*. And he adds to the sin of making an unnecessary attempt on his neighbour's life, by needlessly throwing himself into the utmost danger of losing his own. Nor can mutual consent and permission excuse or be any just vindication of such men, as thus expose their lives; because God being the sole proprietor, the absolute lord of every man's life, no one has any right to dispose of, or determine the duration of it, nor to transfer the disposal of it to another. Lastly, this commandment extends not only to our actions, but to our words, to the secret intentions and affections of our hearts. Our blessed Saviour expressly applies it to the several degrees, and various effects of causeless anger, breaking forth into bitter, reproachful language; and the apostle tells us, that hatred is murder, and inconsistent with the hopes of heaven. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murdherer; and ye know that no-murdherer hath eternal life abiding in him* †. Having thus considered the latitude and extent of the commandment, I proceed,

To represent the guilt and danger which men incur, by transgressing it. If the measure of this transgression is taken, either from the indignity thereby offered unto God, or from the injury done to man, from the punishments expressly denounced against it, or from the anguish and horror which it is apt to leave on the mind, we shall find abundant reason to assign it a place amongst the most heinous crying sins. The first instance of murder in the world, was closely followed with perplexity, oppression of spirit, and intolerable despair. *My punishment* (said Cain, the abandoned fugitive) *is greater than I can bear*; or rather, *My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven*. Every one that findeth

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† 1 John. 3. 15.

me shall slay me. It was a dismal, but natural apprehension, which his guilt suggested to his thoughts, that the whole creation must be alarmed on the occasion, and stand ready to execute vengeance on him. And that weight of confusion, which natural conscience lays on such sinners, must be vastly encreased by the severe expressions of God's indignation against them. *The Lord abhors the blood-thirsty.* Atonements and means of satisfaction were by divine institution provided for the sins of the people, in several other instances of a very high and provoking nature ; but God hath expressly forbid shewing mercy and compassion to a *murderer*, or taking any satisfaction for his life. *If any man hate his neighbour, and smite him mortally that he die, thine eye shall not pity him. Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, but he shall surely be put to death* *. Not the cities of refuge, nor the holy altar of God, (a sanctuary the most sacred and inviolable) could exempt such an unpardonable offender from punishment ; *if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile, thou shalt not take him from mine altar, that he may die* †. And when the irreversibile sentence of death is pronounced on him, the reason given is, that *in the image of God, made he man* ‡. Contempt of God is the great aggravation of sin, which in this of murder is aggravated to a singular height. Not satisfied with defying his laws, and assuming his dominion, they insult his very being, by defacing and destroying the only image of himself, which he hath impressed on the visible world. The injury done to man, is also very notorious ; for other injuries may be repaired, or admit of some compensation, but this is utterly irreparable. Other injuries may
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* Duet. 19. 11, 12, 13. Numb. 35. 31. †Exod. 21 14.

‡ Gen. 9. 6.

rob a man of his estate, reputation, or some particular advantages; but this summary of mischief deprives him all at once of every temporal benefit and satisfaction: Nay, it may prove fatal to the sufferer's soul, as well as body, and at once involve him in the first and second death, by depriving him of that space to repent, which might have been necessary to his eternal salvation. Or, should the injury not follow the sufferer in a future state, and press him down into everlasting destruction, as not happening to him when in an impenitent state; yet it must be an heavy weight to him, even in respect to his view of that eternity, into which he is so suddenly sent.

For who can bear the thoughts of being hastily dispatched into the other world? Who is not exceedingly desirous of going down to the grave in peace and quiet? Even the best of men would be glad of a few leisure minutes at the last, deliberately to review and lament their past defects and miscarriages; would be glad of a little calm and undisturbed space of time, in the conclusion of their lives, to adorn their souls, and prepare them for their immediate appearance before the glorious and unspotted presence of God. How dreadful then must that injury be, which deprives men of circumstances so advantageous and desirable? Such is the guilt and danger attending the transgressing of this commandment, in the first instance of it, as signifying *wilful murder*, or offering unlawful violence to our neighbour's life.

I shall next consider the reasons of the guilt and danger of those persons, who destroy their own lives. That they are transgressing against this commandment, has been already proved, it will therefore be needless to shew, that they are involved in the guilt, and obnoxious to the punishment of murder in general; but they expose themselves in a
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particular manner, to the *greater condemnation*, by some singular sentiments and dispositions, which are commonly the foundation of this unnatural crime. For instance, if men destroy themselves, to avoid present sufferings, do they not tacitly declare, that God shall not act by them as he pleaseth; that they will resolutely break thro' what he hath determined and established; that they will not be confined to such circumstances as he hath allotted them; but will wrest their lives out of his hands, and not suffer him to prolong them, beyond the limits of their own pleasure. And if this is the secret language of their hearts, what can be expected, but that God should execute the severity of his wrath upon them? Or, if pride, envy, and ambition do so govern their minds, as that in the abundance of their arrogance and resentment they will violently remove themselves out of the world, perhaps because they are not advanced to a more advantageous situation in it; what can they reasonably expect or imagine, but to feel the weight of Solomon's observation, *pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall**? A fall into eternal as well as temporal destruction. For what foundation can their be of hope that God will forgive a flagrant sin, without the sinner repenteth? and how can a man truly repent of a sin, in the very commission of which he dies? There are some other sins, besides that of offering direct violence to a man's life, which have been usually esteemed branches of self-murder; as intemperance, or the indulgence of any other vice, which impairs the health and destroys the life.

As to the guilt and danger of engaging in *duels*, these being manifest instances of wilful murder, such persons expose themselves to the severities of God's indignation denounced against it. Those who die in such engagements go into the other

world, not only void of charity, which is absolutely necessary to their future happiness, but glowing hot with wrath and fury. And when such passions have the last possession of their souls, what society of spirits can they be qualified for, to live with to all eternity? Or, should they not immediately perish in the conflict, yet is their guilt the same in the sight of God, the searcher of hearts, who judges of mens wicked attempts, not by the success or event of them, but by the designs and intentions from which they proceed. And dare a man hazard eternal and unspeakable misery, for the sake of resenting an affront, or redress an injury how great soever? Is it a rational conduct, only to avoid a groundless imputation of cowardice, for a man to run such hazard to testify his false courage, by insulting the lord of heaven and earth, and spending the last efforts of his strength and life, in an act of defiance and rebellion against him that gave them? For supposing *duels* the only possible means of redressing some kinds of injury, it would not from thence follow, that recourse should be had thereto, by those who call themselves Christians, and acknowledge the divine authority of the holy scriptures, which enjoin us not to *avenge ourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for saith the Lord, vengeance is mine.* If the world hath advanced some mistaken notions, in direct opposition to God and the gospel, can those who espouse and are influenced by them, be properly numbered amongst the servants of Christ? Every man who professeth the gospel, is obliged to an inviolable exercise of patience, meekness and forbearance, under the various circumstances and occurrences of life, in imitation of our Lord and Saviour. How inconsistent then is it, for a Christian to be governed by such false notions of honour, as are directly contrary to the fundamental rules of his duty?

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Whoever faithfully and constantly adheres to virtue and the positive commands of God, despising every imputation and reflection levelled against him, gives a much stronger evidence of the true greatness and generosity of mind, than those who relinquish their duty to avoid that uneasiness which such treatment occasions. Every great mind will make favourable allowances for little infirmities and heats of passion, which are the unhappiness of human nature, and too apt to arise amongst dearest friends; nor is he less inclined to make all lawful satisfaction, for any injury he hath inadvertently offered his neighbour. To fear men more than God, is the most dishonourable misapplication and degeneracy of fear. To be deterred from obedience by the uneasy apprehension of being censured for the faithful discharge of it; or to be laughed and frighted out of our duty, are certain indications of a weak, little, and base spirit, which for want of ability to support itself, readily gives up the most excellent ornaments and accomplishments, when any attempt is made on them. Those therefore who engage in *duels*, from fear of suffering some seeming calumnies and reproaches, do at once forfeit all just pretensions to true honour and generosity of mind, all claim and title to eternal salvation.

Lastly, we must take diligent heed, not to transgress this commandment, by the intentions and affections of our heart, tho' no actual violence is committed. Those who have not sufficient degrees of natural courage, or want favourable opportunities, actually to defile their hands with blood, may yet sacrifice their neighbour in their secret thoughts and wishes, and indulge their imagination in the views of those mortal wounds, they dare not give; and men who are afraid to handle the instruments of death, may *shoot out their arrows even bitter words*, and pierce the souls of their brethren,

with the expressions of cruelty, malice and contempt. But the Christian law is, that *whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Racha, shall be in danger of the council; but whoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.* And this demonstrates the excellence of the gospel of Christ, that as moral duty is therein raised to the most elevated height of perfection, so more especially does it recommend and promote the exercise of universal charity and benevolence, by an absolute prohibition of all strife, variance, clamour, evil speaking, wrath, hatred, envy, and malice; for these every disciple of Christ has solemnly renounced, and whoever indulges them, dishonours the profession, and forfeits the gospel privileges.

Let then the use and application of this discourse be, that the heinousness of the sin of murder should raise in us a proportionable abhorrence of it, and the utmost esteem and desire of those qualities and practices, which are most directly opposite thereto; that we should not only have the tenderest regard to the preservation of our neighbour's life, but to the comforts and conveniencies of it; that instead of violence and injury, we should abound in acts of beneficence; that anger should be prevented by habitual meekness; malice by loving-kindness and compassion; revenge by constant endearments, and hatred by complacency and delight. So shall we fully answer the end of the commandment, and being thus heavenly in our dispositions here, we cannot fail of obtaining an inheritance in those mansions of everlasting peace, love and joy, where our Saviour is gone to prepare a place for us.

Let the consideration of what has been said, possess our minds with the greatest horror and abomination of this sin of murder; and make us extremely

Disc. XXXVI. *The sixth commandment.* 173

tremely watchful of ourselves, that we never fall into it, but keep at the farthest distance, and tremble at the least approaches towards any degree or instance of it. Let us pray for and endeavour to obtain an humble, meek, and charitable temper; more especially, for the continual assistance of God's grace, which can alone prevent, preserve and restrain us from this, or any other the most enormous transgression. Which God of his infinite mercy grant, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

DISCOURSE XXXVII. Bp. Burnet.

The seventh commandment.

Exodus 20. 14.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

AS this was one of the ten commandments spoken by God himself, so the punishment of it under the Jewish law, was likewise appointed by God; *and the man that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death* *. But tho' in the new testament there are no laws of this nature, against this or any other sin, yet there are much more terrible denunciations made of the judgments of God against it: For, as the author of our blessed religion was, in his own person, *holy, harmless, and undefiled*; so he has most strictly charged us to be *pure and holy in all manner of conversation, as he who called us was holy*, without which we are assured, *we shall not see the Lord*;

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* Lev. 20. 10.

Lord; and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness †.

One part of the judgment of God, against those who live not answerably to their holy profession is, that God gives them up to uncleanness, and to vile affections †; and so odious were all the sins of the flesh to the holy apostles, that they charged the first Christians, not to keep company with any man that was called a brother, that is a Christian, if he was a fornicator, a covetous man, an idolater, a railer, a drunkard, or an extortioner, and with such an one no not to eat ||. St. Paul also warns us, not to deceive ourselves, for neither fornicators, adulterers, thieves, covetous men, drunkards, revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God §. And reckoning up the works of the flesh, he begins at adultery, fornication, and uncleanness; and concludes, that they who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and that therefore, they that are Christ's, that is true Christians, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. The same apostle does also most earnestly charge the Ephesians in these words; but fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becomes saints †*. And to avoid all approaches to it, he charges them to abstain from filthiness, foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient. By which is meant all steps towards impurity, lewd jests, and indecent discourses; to which he adds, for this you know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, or of God. And because there were in those days, as well as in this corrupted age, some who made light of this sin, and perhaps scoffed at the judgments of God, which were declared

† Heb. 7. 26. 1 Pet. 1. 15. Rom. 1. 18.

† Rom. 1. 24. 26. || 1 Cor. 5. 11. § 1 Cor. 6. 9.

†* Eph. 5. 3, 4, &c.

clared against it; he says of these, *let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience; be not ye therefore partakers with them.* And the same things are repeated by him in his epistle to the *Colossians*; and in his second epistle to the *Thessalonians* he tells them, that as it was *the will of God, that they should abstain from fornication*; so it was also the great means of preserving themselves pure, *even their sanctification*; and that tho' the worship of idolaters was commonly defiled with great licentiousness, and many disorders of this sort, yet *God had called Christians not to uncleanness, but to holiness.* And in the visions of *St. John*, *whoremongers* are in two different places reckoned among those that are *shut out of the new Jerusalem, and who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death* †.

Nor did our Saviour only condemn acts of uncleanness, but he being the author of a religion designed for the cleansing of our hearts, has carried the precept further in these words; 'ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart ||.' In this he strikes at the root of sin, which is in the heart; for when lust is once conceived there, *it bringeth forth sin*; and of this sin it may more particularly be said, that when it is finished *it bringeth forth death.* For *Solomon*, whose heart was corrupted by those impure desires, tells us, from sad experience, that he who is enticed by a harlot; 'goeth after her as an ox to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike thro' his liver, and as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knows not that it is for his

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' life;

† Rev. 21. 8. Rev. 22. 15. || Mat. 5. 27, 28.

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‘ life ;’ and he concludes, ‘ her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death §.’ Now tho’ there may seem to be an extreme severity in our Saviour’s charging impure looks and desires with the sin of adultery ; yet this, instead of making the yoke of the commandment heavier, makes it really lighter : It being much harder for us to maintain our purity, if we let our eyes and desires wander after forbidden objects, than it will be to stop the first motions to sin ; and with holy *Job*, to *make a covenant with our eyes*, and upon that to say, *why then should I think upon a maid* * ? St. Paul also useth this argument to persuade us to purity, that *the body is made not for fornication, but for the Lord* ; that we are all *one body in Christ*, and therefore, that our bodies are *the members of Christ* ; that by this sin, those bodies that are sanctified, come to be defiled, and that *our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in us* † ; and elsewhere he says, ‘ that if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple we are ‡.’ Now if it would give us horror to see the house of God defiled, by putting unclean beasts in it ; or which is worse, if we saw the churches prostituted by making them public places of lewdness and vice, we ought, according to St. Paul’s reasoning, to esteem it a much more heinous thing, if these living temples of God should be thus prophaned.

From hence we see, that if we believe the holy scriptures, and take the new testament to be the rule of our life ; nothing can be more clear and express, than that these sins are so odious to God, that no man who lives in them, can have any part or portion in the mercies of God, but that he is of the number of those workers of iniquity, that are
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§ Prov. 7. 22, 23. 27.

* Job 31. 1.

† 1 Cor. 6. 15. 19, &c.

‡ 1 Cor. 3. 17.

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to be cast out into outer darkness, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever. These laws are set us by a holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, for only the pure in heart and life shall see him.—Nor can the spotless Lamb of God suffer any to follow him, who with the swine love to wallow in this defilement. If we think these precepts hard, and these threatnings terrible; this is only for want of due consideration. We must then govern ourselves according to the doctrine of Christ, or renounce our christianity, if we would rather gratify our impure appetites and desires, than keep our bodies thus pure and holy; there is no reconciling this to our holy faith, we cannot be both the *members of Christ*, and the *members of a harlot*. We must not therefore flatter ourselves with false notions, as if these were only dreadful words given out to fright us; they are true, or all christianity is only a cunningly devised fable. For there are no parts of the whole new testament more plain and express, and less liable to any doubtful meaning, than these which have been now delivered; and therefore, if we believe that God has revealed his gospel, as the only means by which we can fly ‘from the wrath which
‘ is to come, when Jesus Christ shall be revealed
‘ from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming
‘ fire, taking vengeance on them that know not
‘ God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord
‘ Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with ever-
‘ lasting destruction, from the presence of the
‘ Lord and from the glory of his power *.’ Then we must be very diligent and sedulous to obey these precepts, that *so cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, we may perfect holiness in the fear of God, and glorify him in our bodies and in our spirits, which are God’s †.*

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And

* 2 Thess. 1. 7, 8, 9. † 2 Cor. 7. 1. 1 Cor. 6. 20.

And besides all that hath been said of the wrath and judgments of God against these sins, if we will but consider the state and order of this world, and our temporal and eternal interest, we shall see many other reasons concurring to enforce the observance of these commandments, and obliging us to acknowledge, that they are *holy, just, and good*. As for married persons, they have mutually given their faith to one another, by a solemn vow and oath made in the presence of God; so that in this sin both perjury and impurity meet together in the same action. The married man that lets his heart wander after other objects, neglects his own house, loaths his wife, and hates his children. Consider you husbands what you do, in the words of *Solomon*, ‘least you give your honour unto others, and
 ‘ your years unto the cruel; least strangers be filled
 ‘ with your wealth, and your labours be in the
 ‘ house of a stranger; and you mourn at last,
 ‘ when your flesh and your body are consumed *.’ When you have nothing left but poverty and shame, rottenness, or loathsome painful diseases, together with a guilty conscience; more exhausted with the horrors of a vicious life, than the body, that is perhaps disfigured, or, at least, violently tormented, with the remnants of those loose and unruly appetites. Follow therefore the advice of the wise man, ‘drink waters of thy own cistern, and
 ‘ running waters out of thine own well, (a figure
 ‘ of speech importing a man’s living happily with
 ‘ his own wife) let them be only thine own, and
 ‘ not strangers with thee; let thy fountain be blessed
 ‘ and rejoice with the wife of thy youth, and be
 ‘ thou ravished always with her love. And why
 ‘ wilt thou, my soul, be ravished with a strange
 ‘ woman? For the ways of man are before the
 ‘ Lord, and he pondereth all his goings †.’ Let

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* Prov. 5. 9, 10, 11.

† Prov. 5. 15, 17, &c

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us not flatter ourselves with this, that our sins are secret, and no eye sees them; *nor yet wait for the twilight, and because we have disguised our face say, no eye shall see me; but we should remember, that God compasses our paths, and is acquainted with all our ways, and besets us before and behind: And tho' we may foolishly say, surely the darkness shall cover me, yet even the night shall be light about us; yea the darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to him* *. Alas! all these stolen pleasures that are now so sweet, when our iniquities shall compass us about, and make us possess many wearisome days and nights; when between a wasting body and a guilty mind, a ruined fortune and a broken family, we feel the arrows of the Almighty piercing us, and the poison of them drinking up our spirits: When our sins have left us nothing in the decays of nature, but shame and infection, tribulation and anguish; then, even when perhaps it is too late, we shall think of crying unto God, and repenting of our sins, after they have left us and not we them; and forsaking them only, as not being able to live any longer in them.

O foolish people and unwise! Why will you not in time consider what shall be the end of all these things? Ye adulteresses, that against the decencies of your nature, and that modesty which is the peculiar ornament of your sex, forget the vows of marriage, and your covenant with God; consider what you lose when you cast off your innocence, and make yourselves the reproach of your husbands, to whom you should be a crown? how you draw infamy on your children, by intermixing a spurious and uncertain brood? how you rob your husbands of their honour, your children of their fame, and yourselves of your reputation and credit? how you

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dissolve

* Psal. 139. 3. 5. 11, 12.

dissolve the tye of marriage, and the affection of a married state? how by an indecent and unchaste deportment, you raise terrible disquiets and uneasiness in the minds of your husbands? *for jealousy is the rage of a man**. It provokes a revenge that often cannot be appeased but with blood, either that of the injured husband, or the object of his jealousy; and the guilt of such blood lies chiefly on the woman, whose unchaste deportment has kindled the furious passion. Your sin is often robbery, as well as adultery and perjury, when the child of one man inherits the estate of the other on whom he is imposed, and who carries away either the whole, or at least his share in an inheritance, that of right belongs to others.

Consider this, all ye that defile the marriage bed, and think to face it out before the world, either with the hypocritical shews of piety, or with a loud and clamorous boldness. Remember you have to do with God, *who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness*, and who will perhaps raise such horrors in your souls, that you will not be able to bear your own burthen, but become a terror to yourselves, as well as a reproach to all that belong to you. As for those who have, perhaps, some apprehensions of the guilt of *defiling the married bed*; and therefore, that they may have less remorse for the free range of pleasure, in which they intend to live, will not enter into a married state, but deny themselves in no appetite, and so live loose and ungoverned lives: Let such persons, *who walk in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes*, remember, that *for all these things God will bring them into judgment*†. Consider that these pleasures of sin, that are but for a season, will waste your strength; expose your life and health to many dangers, and above all corrupt your minds: They will entice you to
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* Prov. 6. 34. † Eccles. 11. 9.

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be the instruments of tempting others to sin; by bringing a double guilt upon you, both your own and the persons whom you delude. Remember you will be the instrument of giving being to an illegitimate issue, who are born to inherit shame and contempt, poverty and misery; you refuse to follow the method that God has appointed for the increase of mankind, but chuse that which your brutish appetites suggest. You who follow forbidden pleasures, run yourselves into such a shameful course of life, as to be often tempted to deny and disown it, even with oaths and bitter imprecations. There is a fatal connection of sins one with another: Ill actions commonly give suspicions, from whence often arise challenges and accusations, and these cannot be thrown off but by bold denials and impudent falsehoods, which are too frequently confirmed by bloody oaths. Injustice of all sorts also proceeds from this ill course of life; persons who promise themselves to one another, are often false therein, and so carry a curse with them into any marriage which they may afterwards contract. In short, these men *walk after the flesh, and not after the spirit*, they prefer their own inordinate affections to the laws of God, and the precepts of the gospel. For St. Paul hath expressly said *, that
 ‘ to avoid fornication, every man ought to have
 ‘ his own wife, and every woman her own husband; and if any cannot contain let them marry;
 ‘ for it is better to marry than burn. Therefore, I
 ‘ beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain
 ‘ from fleshly lusts, which war against your souls;
 ‘ remember that you are redeemed from your vain
 ‘ conversation; be ye therefore as obedient children,
 ‘ not fashioning yourselves according to your
 ‘ former lusts. Remember that whoredom and
 ‘ wine take away the heart; and that, by the means
 ‘ of

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‘ of a whorish woman a man is brought to a morsel of bread ; therefore keep you from the evil woman, and from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thy heart, neither let her take thee with her eye-lids ; for the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are brands, is more bitter than death. Who so pleaseth God shall escape from her ; but the sinner shall be taken by her ; and he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall into this pit †.’

Lay these things to heart seriously, and in time, before you have purchased the knowledge of them at too dear a rate. Consider further, that if such advices were given by *Solomon*, under the old dispensation, in which, by reason of the infirmity of the Jewish nation, and for the hardness of their hearts, many things were dispensed with to them ; certainly they are much more binding to us Christians, who are called to so high a degree of purity. Therefore, it is not enough for us to be *blameless and harmless, and without rebuke*, but we are commanded to walk *as the sons of God, and to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation †*. It is the peculiar character of Christianity, that it obliges us to *mortify our bodies, to crucify the flesh, to put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man* ; so that the same mind may be in us, that was in *Christ Jesus*. We must abstain even from all appearances of evil ; which is set forth in this noble figure, *hating even the garment that is spotted by the flesh* ; that is, our abhorring every approach to any degree of defilement.

If you think these things are difficult, and not easy for flesh and blood, that is not to be denied ; but if you follow the methods recommended in the

† 1 Pet. 2. 11. Prov. 6. 24, 25, 26. Ecclef. 7. 26. Prov. 22. 14. † Phil. 2. 15. Gal. 5. 19. 24.

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the scriptures, you will find the difficulty to grow daily much less. Nor, indeed, ought you to think it hard, if you are required to be at some pains for the saving of your souls. You are willing to put yourselves to trouble for every thing else; the learning of a trade, the following of husbandry, the life of a soldier, are all things of great difficulty, and that yield but a small reward; yet men submit themselves to much toil and drudgery in every one of these. Most mens diversions and pleasures put them to a good share of trouble; and is it to be imagined, that so great a thing as eternal life, should be obtained without any difficulty or labour. — Yet after all, the labour is not so great, but it may be overcome. If men will by *rioting and drunkenness*, by sloth and idleness, and by exposing themselves to such temptations, as they may easily avoid and resist in the beginning, if they are a little watchful; I say, if they will by such methods *be laying in provision for the flesh, and for its lusts and affections*, then it is no wonder, if their appetites thus indulged, should be high and unruly. But if they will learn to be sober and temperate, and study by fasting often to subdue the body; if they will avoid all that company and those occasions that betray them into these sins; keeping themselves free from the first steps, in which the appetite is yet but weak and feeble, and will follow the works of their calling with care and application, so as to employ their thoughts and time in them: And if they will make choice of such diversions, as do not betray them into these temptations, they will then find it very easy to resist or avoid them. The heathens understood this, and even one of the lewdest of their poets tells us, that the strength and arts of lusts perish, if men take care to be well employed and are not idle.

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In the next place, you ought to follow the rule of religion, and to take a help-meet, with whom you may hope to live happily together. Where the husband and wife are united to each other with the bonds of virtue and religion, and love one another in the Lord ; as this is a kind of heaven upon earth, so it secures their hearts from impure and wanderings desires, as long as they so continue and remain. In order to this end, you ought to be very careful in the choice you make in marrying yourselves, or your children ; that you may not sacrifice both the peace and purity of your lives, to those base considerations, upon which many of those, who even pass for wise persons, in the esteem of the world, chuse a consort ; and sell themselves or their children for a little money, or some other secular ends. But those who would *marry in the Lord*, that is as becomes Christians, ought to make such a choice, that in the company of the person, with whom they are to lead their lives, they may hope to serve God, and to save their own souls : Therefore the virtue and piety of the person, ought to be the first and chief thing minded ; not but that other considerations ought also to have a part and share therein : But when regard is only had to wealth, or other carnal ends ; then the marriage will be soon repented of, the bed loathed, nothing but brawlings and contention, and at last a dissolution of that sacred faith.

To the sins of our fathers, this age has added the open giving up of marriages, and the parties allowing themselves that, which no religion nor law can allow them, to live impudently in a consortsip with other persons, as if they were married to them ; which is a degree of wickedness, that we have added to the former measure of our sins, and which without this was measure heaped up and running over. God grant it may not be the *filling up the measure*

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measure of our fathers; and that God who has threatened, that he will be a swift witness against the adulterers, and the false swearers ||, do not for the sake of those breakers of wedlock, who become guilty of both these sins at once, arise against this nation to judgment because of those crimes, whereof men are so far from being ashamed, that they openly commit them in the sight of the sun.

To conclude, let every man pray earnestly to God, that he would assist him with his grace to subdue and mortify this body of sin, with all its lusts and evil affections. And such as do earnestly beg this of him, and do also make use of the means which he hath appointed to keep themselves pure and undefiled, may rest assured and well satisfied; that he who gives liberally to all men, and upbraideth no man, will either grant continence, which St. Paul calls a special gift of God, that indeed every man hath not*; or to such whom by not granting this, he calls to a married state, which is honourable in all men; he will grant a blessing in their marriage: For a good wife is said to be the gift of God, a prudent wife is from the Lord; and God, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift†, will certainly grant to all such, as do earnestly seek to him, either one or other of these gifts, as he sees may be best for them. Therefore, to end all in the words of the same apostle, lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls‡.

|| Mat. 23. 32. Mal. 3. 5. * 1 Cor. 7. 7.

† Prov. 19. 14. Jam. 1. 17. ‡ Jam. 1. 21.

DISCOURSE XXXVIII. Bp. Hopkins.

The eighth commandment.

*Exodus 20. 15.**Thou shalt not steal.*

AS the former commandment requires chastity in our persons, so this does honesty and uprightness in our dealings; a virtue immediately founded on that first practical principle, of all human converse, which our Saviour lays down; *whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them*: and recommends it to us, as the sum and epitome of all the scriptures; *for this is the law and the prophets* *. A principle, that carries such innate light and clear evidence in itself, that the very heathens frequently inculcate it in their writings, as the primary dictate of that morality, which they taught. This is a maxim we all assent to, not by any elaborate instructions, dint of arguments, or long train of consequences; but it masters our understandings by its native evidence, and springs up in us, as an unpremeditated resolve of reason. Both God and nature have set up this standard in our consciences. And usually there needs no other judge of our actions towards others, than by comparing them with what in the like cases, we would think just and fit to be done to us. It may be, we are all partial to ourselves, in our present concerns; and whilst we only look that way, we may possibly seek all advantages to promote them, tho'

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* Mat. 7. 12.

to another's detriment. But reason and religion will teach us to put ourselves in their stead, and then to manage our transactions with them, as we should judge just and reasonable, were we in their condition. And therefore when we deal with others, we should first act to ourselves both parties. For instance, a servant should consider, what respect he would require, was he in the same circumstances with his master, and had servants under him. Children should consider what duty and obedience they would expect, were they parents of children. Subjects, what honour and submission they might reasonably demand, were they magistrates; and so in any other relation: and when they have thus seriously pondered it in their own thoughts, let them then perform the same duties to others, in their real condition, as they judged to belong to them, in that which was only imagined. For it is a never failing rule to direct our practice, that what we judge due to us, were we in another man's condition, is certainly as due to him in his own; and if we do not so act, we betray a great deal of selfishness, and sinful partiality. This is a rule applicable to all affairs; and there is scarce any one occurrence of a man's life, but he may regulate himself, according to this direction; and, indeed, there scarce needs any other. Whatsoever then we have to transact with another, tho' perhaps we might take such advantages of him, as possibly he might never know, or be able to redress; yet let us seriously ask our consciences, if we could be content, and think it honest and just, to be so used ourselves; and if not, whatsoever the temptation be, either of gain, pleasure, or profit, let us reject it with scorn, as that which would make us violate the first principle of common honesty among men, and contradict the laws both of nature and scripture. Was this rule more generally observed
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among men, the world would not have that cause to complain of rapine, extortion, oppression, fraud, and injustice, as now it hath. The rich would not grind the face of the poor, nor the poor unjustly clamour against the rich. Superiors would not tyrannize over their inferiors, nor inferiors murmur or rebel against their superiors; but an equal peace, an uniform justice, would overspread the whole earth; and *righteousness would run down our streets as a mighty stream.* And therefore let me once more recommend it, (for indeed I cannot press it too often) that we would frequently set this golden rule before us, and do nothing to any other person, which, were we in his capacity, we should think unjust to be done unto ourselves: and whatsoever we would expect from others, as our due, were we in their place; even that ought we to perform to them, or otherwise we must condemn ourselves. This is a dictate of nature and right reason; the sum of the law and the prophets. And all those various precepts which are given us in scripture, for the conduct of our lives, are but as so many lines that meet in this centre. And if we apply it to each particular command of the second table, we shall find them to be all founded on, and interpreted by this. We are required to honour our superiors, to abstain from murder, adultery, theft, false accusations, and coveting what belongs to another; and all this according to the same measures, that we would have others perform these very duties to us. So that *self*, which is now the great tempter to wrong and injure others; was it governed by this universal maxim, would be the greatest patron of other mens rights and properties. I have the longer insisted on this, it having such general influence on the right ordering of our conversation; and because the most visible apparent violation, of this natural law, is by the
sin

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sin of theft, forbidden in this commandment of which I am treating.

Theft in general, is an unjust taking, or detaining, what is lawfully another man's. He is a thief, who withholds what ought to be in his neighbour's possession, or takes from him what he before possessed. For all theft presupposeth a right and property in another. God is the great Lord and proprietor of heaven and earth, and all things therein. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof* ||; by him, and of him, are all things; according to the pleasure of his will, they are and were created; and he hath granted unto man, a large charter of the world, of every thing, that is good. *The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath he given to the children of men* †. A large and regal gift, whereby he hath made over unto man all sublunary things, reserving unto himself the sovereignty and supreme lordship of all, and requiring only from man the homage and payment of obedience; and yet this large charter and donation gave no particular propriety unto any: for had man continued in his happy and innocent state, there would have been no need of *meum* and *tuum*, or any partition of these earthly possessions; but common blessings had been enjoyed in common by all. But sin entering into the world, mens desires after earthly enjoyments grew immoderate, and their attempts to attain them, injurious to others; so that it became necessary to prescribe bounds and limits, that each man knowing his assigned portion, might rest satisfied therewith, and be restrained from invading and usurping on the rights of others. And there was no other way to effect this, but by human laws, mutual compact and agreement, declaring the rights and properties of every man. So that it is law which determines property, and there is nothing

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|| Psal. 24. 1.

† Psal. 115. 16.

ours, or another's, farther than this assigns it to us. Indeed, equity must sometimes interpose to moderate the letter of the law; for in some cases should we rigorously prosecute our right, and insist upon every punctilio, we might call our due, it would become intolerable, and be a breach and violation of the law of Christ, and of charity, which requires us rather to part with our own in small matters, than to be vexatious or contentious. Thus you see how all right and property first came into the world. A general right by the donation of God; a particular right, by the sanction of laws, allotting to each man his portion; which to invade or take from him, is injustice, or theft.—But as to theft, there are many kinds thereof. The highest and chiefest is that which is committed against God by sacrilege. Sacrilege is an alienation from God, of whatsoever he hath appropriated to himself, or that is upon good grounds dedicated to the encouragement and maintenance of his honour and service. Indeed, the alienating what hath been given to superstitious or idolatrous uses, cannot be justly branded with sacrilege, for it was not so much given to God, as to ignorance and superstition; and therefore our ancestors have done well and piously, in dissolving those nests of unclean birds, the monasteries, that were so numerous and burthensome in these kingdoms. But where any thing is indeed consecrated to God, and set apart for the maintenance and encouragement of his worship and service, it is no less than sacrilege and robbing of God, to alienate any part of this to secular uses. And of this God himself grievously complains, *will a man rob God, yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? in tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation* *. Certainly those things, which

* Malachi 3. 8. 9.

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which are appointed for the worship and service of God, whether originally by divine right or not; yet they cannot be alienated, nor detained without involving the persons, or the nation who doth it, in a great sin: for this is to rob God of his right. Again,

Theft may be committed against men, by an unjust seizure, or detention, of what belongs to them; and this may be done, either by fraud or force; and therefore our Saviour in reciting the commandments mentions them both, *do not steal, defraud not* *. This is a sin, that God hath threatened with many severe curses and punishments. The temporal punishments, which the scripture pronounces, is an ample and sufficient restitution †; and therefore *Zacheus*, when he was converted, offers a four-fold restitution to those he had wronged. *If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold* ‡. And yet besides this restitution, sometimes the offenders were put to death, especially if to their theft, they added cruelty and oppression. This appears in the parable of *Nathan* ||, when he had most artificially aggravated the rich man's crime, in taking away the poor man's lamb, he so raised *David's* compassion and indignation, that he pronounces this sentence; *the man that hath done this thing shall surely die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity*. So that under the law of *Moses*, it was in some cases lawful to punish a thief with death; tho', usually, restitution was only required. Indeed our law condemns them to death, and yet we see how many persist in this wicked course of life, notwithstanding that severe punishment: and if the fear of death will not deter them, that of restitution would be much less effectual.

But

* Mark 10. 19.

† Luke 19. 8.

‡ Exod. 22. 1.

|| 2 Sam. 12. 5. 6.

But besides the punishment of the law, God leaves a curse upon what is gotten by theft and deceit; a curse that will blast and consume all such wicked increase. Luxury and intemperance usually devour what is got by rapine; God by his righteous judgment making one sin the vengeance of another. And therefore saith the wise man, *The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; and, as the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool*†. God many times raises up such against them, as will make them refund their ill gotten treasure. Thus God threatned the *Caldeans, because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee* *. Such unjust acquisitions tend only to treasure up for themselves and their posterity, want and poverty. And therefore if we desire to prosper in the world, and to have our substance encrease and multiply, we must be sure that no gain of robbery or oppression, fraud or deceit, be found in our hands, for this will devour our lawful acquisitions.

Besides great anxiety of mind doth always accompany ill-gotten wealth. It is a sin so much against the light of nature, that conscience, if not totally hardened, will be forever tormenting them with uneasy thoughts and reflections; for the fear of detection, of shame, and punishment incident thereto, must needs be a continual misery to them. But what is acquired fairly and with a good conscience, by an honest and lawful calling, whether more or less, it brings this contentment with it, that a man may quietly sit down and rejoice in that portion which the providence and bounty of God, his most gracious and heavenly father, hath afforded him. He drinks no widows tears, nor orphans blood;

† Prov. 21. 7. Jer. 17. 11. * Hab. 2. 8.

blood; he eats not the flesh of the poor, nor breaks the bones of the needy; his conscience checks him not when feeding on what his honest labour and industry hath procured; and tho' it be but a bit of bread, or cup of cold water, yet is he entertained at a continual feast. And what he eats, is far more savoury to him, than all the heightened delicacies of rich oppressors. Therefore better is a *little with righteousness, than great revenues without right*. For a *little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked* ||. Robbery and deceit also provoke God to cut such men off, by some untimely stroke, and immature judgment; either by the hand of human justice with shame and reproach, or of divine justice with wrath and vengeance. For so it is threatned, *Thou, O God, shall bring them down into the pit of destruction; bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days* †. That is, they shall not live to that period which the course and strength of nature would otherwise permit; but the hand of God will cut them off in the midst of their vigour, and flourishing years. But however it may be with some of them in this life; if they escape the reproach of men, and the sword of justice; yet they shall certainly be eternally miserable. Their ill gotten goods shall not be able to redeem their souls, to bribe the justice of God, or to obtain the least solace and comfort. And what wretched fools are they, who must everlastingly perish, for gaining of things that are perishable. *Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God**. Where then shall there portion be, but in the lake burning with fire and brimstone, that is unquenchable? where the Lord will spoil their very souls, as the wise man's expression is, *rob not the poor, for the Lord will plead their*

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|| Prov. 16. 8. Psal. 37. 16. † Psal. 55. 23.

* 1 Cor. 6. 10.

their cause, and will spoil the souls of those that spoiled them†. And thus you see the various ways that God hath threatened to punish this first and greatest kind of theft, of taking away the right of another.

Another kind of theft, is oppression and unreasonable exaction; taking advantage either of the weakness or necessity of others, and imposing such unequal conditions upon them, as they cannot bear, without their detriment and ruin. Contrary to the express words of God, *if thou sell aught unto thy neighbour, or buyest aught at thy neighbour's hands, ye shall not oppress one another* †. Thus those who let out money at an extravagant interest, or rigidly exact it from insufficient persons; also the great, who force the meaner sort into disadvantageous bargains, and make them thro' fear, to sell at an under price; these, and the like, tho' not condemned by human laws, are yet guilty by the law of God, of no less sin than oppression, a sin hateful both to God and man. The prophet calls it, *a plucking off their skin from them, and their flesh from their bones, and chopping them in pieces, as for the pot* *. All unmercifulness and hard dealings with others, is a kind of theft. For the law of nature, and much more the law of charity, obliges us so to deal with others, as not to give them cause to complain of us to God; and in the bitterness of their spirits to imprecate on us the severity of his wrath and vengeance.

Again, To detain from others what is their due, either by equity or compact, is another kind of theft. How many are there whose profuse riot and luxury are maintained at the expence of the poor creditors ruin; who often have no other satisfaction than good words, and scarce any thing to live on, but tears and sighs? How many withhold the hire of poor labourers, who when wearied out

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† Prov. 22. 23. † Lev. 25. 14. * Micah 3. 2, 3.

in service, cannot receive for necessary refreshment, that small reward which his labours, with the toil and sweat of his own brows, required and earned. *Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant, that is poor and needy; at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it. For he is poor and setteth his heart upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the lord, and it be sin unto thee †.* And in all our bargains and agreements, we are bound to perform them, tho' never so much to our prejudice, unless the other party will release the contract. For this is one character of a good man, *he that sweareth, and covenanteth to his own hurt, and changeth not ||*; but upon demand is ready and willing to perform and execute his agreement.

Another kind of theft is, in buying and selling; and this is of a very large extent. For the subtilty of man hath found out so many artifices to defraud and over-reach others, that to recount them, is almost as difficult as to escape them. Such are the false weights and measures, *that are an abomination to the Lord †*; also false and counterfeited wares, over-commending, or undervaluing of goods for advantage, and many other unjust contrivances, which mens consciences better know, than another can suggest. The apostle hath sufficiently cautioned and threatened such men; *let no man go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter, because the Lord is an avenger of such **. There is a day coming when the false weights shall be weighed, and the scanty measures measured, by a standard that is infallibly true. Possibly we may deal so craftily, that those whom we over-reach can take no advantage against us, to right themselves by law; but we should remember, that the great judge will at the last day avenge them upon us. Then

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† Deut. 24. 14. || Psal. 15. 5. † Prov. 11. 1.
* 1 Thes. 4. 6.

all accounts shall be balanced, and what remains shall be certainly paid ; tho' not to the injured, yet to the justice of God, who is the great and universal creditor. Thus we have seen what the negative part of this command is, as to many particular instances thereof ; others I could have mentioned had time permitted ; and since every negative implies a positive, I shall now proceed to consider what is the duty required from us. Which is, *first*, that all of us should have some calling. *Secondly*, That we should be contented with that state and condition of life, in which providence hath fixed us.

First, Thou shalt not steal ; Therefore every man ought to have a calling, whereon he may comfortably subsist, and by his labour and industry, at least provide necessaries for himself and family. *He that provideth not for his family hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* Some there are who live without any calling, such are like idle drones, that consume the labour of others ; lazy vagabonds, to whom the greatest charity would be correction ; who only serve to devour misplaced alms, and defraud the truly poor of relief. And we may rank with these, some others, who are neither serviceable to God, nor their country ; who have nothing of true worth in them, being the most unprofitable members of the common wealth, and only live to kill and destroy one another, in their drunken quarrels. It is certain, that those whom God hath liberally endowed with his earthly blessings, have no necessity for manual employments and labour ; but yet they may within their own sphere find business enough, to employ their time and thoughts, so as to render them the most beneficial men on earth, and make them to be loved and honoured by others. For by their authority and example, by the largeness of their income and revenues, and the de-

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dependence that others have on them, they might be as influential to promote goodness and virtue, as too often they are to countenance and encourage vice. But as some have no employment, so others have an unlawful one, whose only business is to teach and inculcate vice, and excite men to it. And how many such are there, who live by encouraging of wickedness in others, who are continually making use of all allurements to entice unto evil, recommending debauchery first to the fancy, then to the will and affections?

There are others who indeed have a lawful and honest calling, but then they are negligent and slothful; and which tends to poverty. *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall poverty come as one that travelleth †; drawing nearer by soft and silent degrees.* Poverty also tempts to theft, as Solomon says, *lest I am poor and steal ‖.* And therefore this command which forbids theft, must by consequence enjoin labour and industry in our lawful callings. According to the apostle, *let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth †;* and so by industry, of a thief, he may become a benefactor and alms-giver. And as this commandment requires that we should be employed in some calling; so it,

Secondly, enjoins us contentment with that portion of earthly good things, which our heavenly father allots us. *Be content with those things ye have *.* And certainly he that is not content with what God allows him, lies under a great temptation, by fraudulent and unjust courses, to carve out his own condition to himself, and invade the rights and properties of others. Discontent and covetousness

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† Prov. 6. 10. 21. ‖ Prov. 30. 9. † Eph. 4. 28.
* Heb. 13. 5.

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are the root of all injustice. He that thinks himself injured, because he enjoys not so much as others, will be apt either thro' fraud or violence to encrease his substance, by taking from his neighbour. Let us therefore in time check this repining temper, and be satisfied with that provision which God hath afforded us ; and tho' it be not the most delicate, or the most sumptuous, yet *having food and raiment, let us be therewith content* †. Let us look upon all other things as superfluous or indifferent ; and not murmur tho' we should never attain them. For whatsoever is necessary to our subsistence, God's providence and blessing on our industry will supply us with ; and we ought not to repine for not having, what we do not absolutely want.

I shall conclude this discourse by an exhortation to those who are conscious to themselves of having wronged others. Let then such know, that they are in duty bound to restore the thing stolen or purloined, if it be in their power ; if not, restitution must be made another way, by an adequate, ample, and satisfactory compensation ; it not being enough to confess the sin to God, and beg his pardon, but restitution of the thing, or recompence for it, with the damage sustained, must also be made and rendered, without which, pardon and remission of the guilt from God, can never be expected. And the reason is, because as long as any detains another's right and property, such continues in the same sin ; for unjust possession is a continued and prolonged theft. And certainly that repentance of any sin, can never be true or sincere, of which tho' we seem to repent, yet we continue in. And without a true repentance, how can God's pardon be expected ? but perhaps some will say, what if those we have defrauded are dead, how can restitution be then made them ? To which I answer, In such case

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we are bound to make satisfaction to their children or representatives, and if there are none to be found, then we ought to dispose of it in acts of charity and piety. Some possibly may think this a very hard lesson of instruction, yet this is the rule of christianity, the inflexible laws of justice, and without complying therewith, we can have no reasonable hopes, of obtaining God's pardon. For which may we all fit and prepare ourselves.

DISCOURSE XXXIX. *Dr. Hole.*

The ninth commandment.

Exod. 20. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

AS the former commandment is intended to defend our properties, from wrong and violence; so this is designed to preserve our good name, from slander and defamation; a good name is so excellent and valuable a thing, that the very subsistence of some, the conveniency and happiness of all, do much depend thereon. The wise man tells us, *it is rather to be chosen than great riches*; indeed the one without the other, will afford but little comfort. And elsewhere he says, *a good name is better than precious ointment* †; for it yields a sweet savour to all about us, it perfumes the air we breathe in, scatters its fragrantcy abroad, and transmits the odour to posterity.

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† Prov. 22. 1. Eccl. 7. 1.

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sterity. And as a good name is in it self highly desirable, so is it a very tender thing, easily wounded, and sometimes incurable; for which reason this commandment was given to secure it from all unjust assaults. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.* This precept being negative, I shall first consider what is therein forbidden, which in general, are all the ways of injuring the credit and reputation of our neighbour, either publicly or privately; as

By bringing a false accusation, or giving a false testimony against any in courts of judicature; which is wounding of mens good name within the very letter of this commandment. This may be done, either by charging any person with what they know to be false, as that of *Potiphar's* wife, who charged *Joseph* with incontinence, when she knew to the contrary; such also were they who falsely accused our Saviour as an enemy to *Cæsar*, and his apostles as troublers of the world, and *turning it upside down.* This crime, however common, is a work of the devil, and those who practise it are the children of that wicked one. Again, bearing of false witness may be done, by concealing something that is true, whereby great injury may happen to men; or, by affirming a thing with a higher degree of assurance than our knowledge extends to. In the first case, he that kills another, in his own defence, or in the execution of justice, may be condemned as a murderer, if those alleviating circumstances are not brought to light: And in the other, he that attests a thing as certain, which he believes to be only probable, gives a false testimony, because what he asserts or swears to, may, for aught he knows, be otherwise. So that in either case, he that thus swears, is guilty of bearing false witness.

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Another way of bearing false witness against our neighbour, is that of lying; a vile practice, against which we have many express texts of scripture: as, *Lye not one to another, put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour* †. The evil of lying is very apparent; for it perverts the end of speech, which is freely and fairly to communicate our minds to each other. It robs our neighbour of that debt of truth which is due to all men, and makes the tongue, which was given for the glory of God, and the good of one another, to become the instrument of deceit and dishonour to both. And therefore our Saviour tells us, *that lying is of the devil, who was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it*, and they who delight therein, shall have their portion with him, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Slandering is another instance of bearing false witness against our neighbour. And this consists in raising or spreading false reports of him, to the prejudice of his fame and character. This is too common a fault among men, who whet their tongue like a sword, which cuts as a sharp razor; wounding the reputation of others, without consideration or remorse. And this is done, sometimes by fixing black and infamous characters on men, to their prejudice and great detriment. We find our Saviour himself could not escape the lashes of slandering tongues, for he was branded with characters the most infamous; an *impostor*, a *blasphemer*, a *glutton*, a *wine-bibber*, a *friend of publicans and sinners*. And his apostles were stiled, *seditious*, and *troublers of the world*. And among ourselves, how often do we hear the odious titles of proud, covetous, malicious, and the like invidious epithets, fixed on persons deserving a better character.

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Detraction is another crime condemned by this commandment. Detraction differs from slander in this, that the latter is a wrongful imputation of some vice, the other is a wilful lessening of another's virtue. The one consists in a charge of evil on our neighbour, the other in undervaluing and obscuring the good he does. This of detraction is a fault no less frequent than injurious. When the merits of any person shine forth, with a brighter lustre than others, many are busy to cast a cloud on them, and sully the glory of his best actions. A detractor loves to find flaws and blemishes in the best things, and to derogate from the praise of the most worthy. He is uneasy under the commendation of others, thinking it lessens his own worth, and therefore seeks to raise fame on the ruin of others; by diminishing the good, aggravating the evil, blaming the principles, disparaging and perverting his best actions, and most innocent designs. But this is directly opposite to that part of charity which we call candour and ingenuity, for that inclines men to commend the virtues, and good qualities of others, giving every thing its due weight; and instead of disclosing, will hide a multitude of sins; charity gives all persons and actions their just praise, and so far from speaking, it *thinketh no evil*.

Flattery is another way of bearing false witness against our neighbour, and this differs from the former, in that as the detractor takes off from another's worth, the flatterer adds too much to it, and so hurts his credit as much in the excess, as the other diminishes from it. The flatterer represents persons and things otherwise than they are, extolling some too high, and giving greater characters of them than they deserve. There are some who will celebrate such virtues in another, which they know is not in them; and others, who if they see one guilty of a vice, will conceal that and commend him for the
contrary

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contrary virtue, calling *evil good, and good evil, light darkness, and darkness light*, from whence have proceeded many notorious evils.

All judging and censuring of others, scoffing at, and exposing them to contempt, are here condemned, as bearing false witness against our neighbour. We are commanded, to *judge not lest we are judged*, and Solomon tells us, *he that mocketh his neighbour is void of understanding* *. That is, he doth not well consider the damage and detriment he thereby does him. For this is many times a great prejudice to the name, and also to the quiet and interest of another. These are the more open and public ways of hurting the credit of our neighbour, and are here forbidden, as *bearing false witness against him*. Besides these, there are other more secret and private ways of wounding another's reputation, that fall under the prohibition of this commandment, as back-biting, whispering, and tale-bearing; and which, tho' less observed, are by no means the least injurious. Nay are oftentimes the more dangerous, by not being seen and discerned, before they have done incurable evils. These sort of evil-speakers work like moles under ground; and as men may suffer more by the invisible hollowness of an earthquake, than the loudest blusters of a storm; so the credit of our neighbour may receive deeper wounds by the invisible darts of secret calumnies, than by the bolder strokes of open and public slanders.

Backbiting is the speaking evil of another behind his back, by which many have greatly suffered; an enemy that comes behind and unawares, being far more dangerous, than a known and declared one. Against the latter we may arm and defend ourselves, but the other attacks us cowardly, when we are ignorant of his designs. And therefore we

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find

* Prov. 11. 12.

find the back-biter in the black list of the greatest sinners; and numbered with those who are to be excluded the kingdom of heaven. Whereas a good man is described to be one who *back-biteth not his neighbour*; and is thereby fitted to *ascend the holy hill*†.

Whispering is that sort of back-biting, that consists in relating mens failings in private. This is an artificial and very malicious way of defaming, and many times makes greater impressions than more open calumnies. For he that is intrusted with this secret, generally obliges another with it, and so is communicated to others, till it creeps about like infection, and leaves the party's reputation wounded beyond redress. These also are in the catalogue of such as are given up to a reprobate mind, and who without repentance shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven ||. Tale-bearing is somewhat a more open way of defaming, and signifies the telling tales of others as a piece of news, and to find matter of talk, which is often done to the great prejudice of mens good name, and therefore God Almighty gave an express charge against it, *Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer, among the people* †. The word in the original signifies a trader in ill reports and stories of other men. This is what the psalmist condemns in some, *who sit and speak against their brother, and slander their own mother's son, whose words are as swords, and wound even to the innermost parts of the belly* *. These, besides the evil they do to mens good name, destroy the peace and quiet of the whole neighbourhood; *for a tale-bearer stirreth up strife, and separateth very friends*.

Thus we see what is forbidden in this commandment, namely, all manner of evil speaking, both open and secret, public or private, to the prejudice

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† Rom. 1. 30. 1 Cor. 6. 10. Psal. 15. 3.
 || Rom. 1. 30. Lev. 19. 16. * Psal. 50.
 Prov. 26. 22.

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of the fame and reputation of another, which is in some respect to *bear false witness against one's neighbour*. But because all the motives and occasions of this evil are forbidden with it, therefore the apostle commands us to *lay aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envyings, and all evil speakings**. To *lay aside all malice*, which whets the tongue against one another; *all guile*, which tips it with falsehood and dissimulation; *all hypocrisy*, in disparaging or flattering of others; *all envyings*, which sours mens minds and corrupts their discourses; *all evil speaking*, which breeds the poison of asps under their lips: In a word, let us lay aside all pride, self-interest, evil speaking, faction, and whatever may tend to slander and defamation. I now proceed to consider what duties are required of us in this commandment. And,

We are to preserve the honour and good name of our neighbour. This is what St. *Peter* means, when he commands us to *honour all men* †; that is we are to be so tender of the honour or reputation of every one, as instead of impairing, to do all we can to preserve and advance it. And this honour and esteem for all, is founded on some excellency common to mankind; who have all the image of God stamp'd upon them, and should therefore in reason, have a suitable regard paid even to the meanest person. For tho' some are in a more exalted station, and whose greater parts and power may demand higher degrees of it, yet some measure of honour and respect is due to that common nature of whom all are partakers; and that is to have a tender regard for the good name of every one, and to preserve all men as far as we can from reproach and contempt; for, as the wise man says, *he that mocketh, or despiseth, the poorest man, despises his maker*. It is a contempt of God to despise

or

* 1 Pet. 2. 1. † 1 Pet. 2. 17.

or vilify such as bear his image, and we debase ourselves in abusing those who are so nearly allied to us by an affinity of nature; whom we ought to honour and esteem for God's sake, and to love them for our own. We should be as tender of their character and reputation, as those of ourselves. If we see a man suffer, under a slander which we know to be false, we are obliged to appear in his defence, to assert and vindicate his abused innocence, and to the best of our power, remove such unjust aspersions. This is implied in not *bearing false witness*, and is part of justice we owe to the reputation of all men.

This commandment requires truth in our words and promises. For the *not bearing false witness*, signifies our bearing true witness, which we are to regard in all our speeches; for a good man is one who *speaketh the truth from his heart* *. This should be observed in public courts of justice, and in all private commerce and conversation. In courts of justice, when we are summoned to bear witness for or against any, we must speak the truth from our hearts. This is a matter of great consequence to the lives and fortunes of men, on which the safety and security of both do very much depend. And therefore the oath administered on such occasions, is, that men should speak *the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth*. *The truth*; without forging or falsifying any matter which perverts judgment and justice. *The whole truth*; without concealing any part out of favour or prejudice to either party, which prevents justice from being rightly administered, and may occasion much wrong. *Nothing but the truth*; without adding any doubtful and uncertain conjectures, whereby a jury may be induced to give a hard and injurious sentence. These are the properties of a good witness, upon whose testimony men's lives and estates depend. *A faithful witness will not lye, or forge any thing; but*

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a false witness will utter lyes. And, he that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness, but a false witness deceit ||. All who are required to give evidence in any cause, should be careful to confine their testimony to such things only as they know to be true. For it is this that preserves the public peace and welfare, prevents injustice and wrong, and secures to us quiet and tranquility of mind, and whereby we also promote God's glory. *Joshua bids Achan give glory to God by speaking the truth, in the matter of the wedge of gold* *. By speaking truth we glorify and reverence God's attributes, and conform to his nature and will, who is truth itself, and requires truth in the inward parts; but we highly dishonour him, by bearing false witness, because we thereby disown all love and fear of him.

And as this commandment requires truth in courts of justice, so does it in all our conversation and commerce with each other; we being enjoined to *speak every man truth with his neighbour* †. In all private converse our Saviour's advice is, *that our communication be yea, yea, nay, nay*; that is, to affirm or deny nothing contrary to the truth, but to declare things as they are, without falsifying or forswearing. For these are of the evil one, who was a liar from the beginning, and the father of them; but God is truth, and his servants are stiled *children that will not lye*, who have a veneration for truth in all their words and actions. Truth is too sacred a thing to be prostituted, or trifled with. It being the cement and safeguard of all society, and what ought to be inviolably observed in all our communications with one another; more especially in our promises and contracts, where our words should correspond with our thoughts, and be agreeable to our purposes and resolutions, in performing such agreements as we have made. It is such a serious regard

* Josh. 7. 19. † Ephes. 4. 5. || Prov. 15. 5. *ib.* 12. 7.

gard to truth, that can only answer the end of speech, which was given as a means to convey our mind and meaning, and to be the instrument of intercourse and mutual confidence between each other. So that he who useth his tongue to the speaking truth, employs it as God hath appointed; but a liar contradicts and inverts the design of speech, by making his tongue instrumental to promote and propagate falshood, deceit, and slander. Indeed, truth is what all men owe to one another, and whoever falsifies or equivocates with his neighbour, does an act of great injustice, by depriving him of that right of truth, which God hath made due to every man; and he most notoriously *bears false witness*, who speaks one thing, and intends another. And therefore,

Another virtue required in this commandment is an honest simplicity, in all our words and actions. By this the heart will be void of all evil purposes and designs, and possessed only with just sentiments and strong desires of doing good. He that inwardly designs to hurt and injure another, generally disguises his intentions by outward fair speeches, and so conceals the wickedness of his heart by the flattery and falshood of his tongue; but he that hath good wishes for others, his tongue will not vary from his heart, nor his actions from either, but a true harmony and agreement will be found in both; even that *simplicity and godly sincerity*, in which all men are directed to have their conversation.

But this simplicity consists in several particulars; *namely*, in a freedom from all malice, which is the vilest of all the passions, stiled therefore not only wicked, but is wickedness itself: For malice is compounded of anger and hatred, but more dangerous than both. It is a secret, subtle, and mischievous passion, having the craft of the fox mixed with the cruelty of the tyger. It fills the heart with gall, tips the tongue with falshood, and, as *Solomon* says

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says, will not suffer men *to sleep till they have done evil* *. But an honest simplicity of mind is free from all this ; it desires all good, and intends no evil, to his neighbour ; it has the wisdom of the serpent, and yet retains the innocence of the dove, and will not harm any, in body, goods, or name. And the simplicity here required is to be free from all guile, hypocrisy, and dissimulation. Such things put false colours upon mens words and actions, make them appear to be what they are not, and set them upon using much art and industry, to carry on the disguise. They that have recourse to these measures, speak one way and act another, profess the greatest respect, when their designs are most dangerous, and by fair speeches palliate the foulest actions. *David* complained that his greatest enemies, were those who pretended the most friendship. Says he, *it was not an open enemy, that did me this dishonour, but my companion and my own familiar friend, they that eat of my bread laid wait for me.* *Judas* came to our Saviour with hail master ! and kissed him at the same time he betrayed him. And *St. Paul* was in great perils by false brethren, who spake him fair, when they designed him the greatest mischief. This is but too much practised in our days, wherein the ancient simplicity of our forefathers, is in a great measure lost, and men are degenerated in craft and subtilty, laying snares in their discourse, and traps in their ways and dealings ; directly contrary to the simplicity required in this commandment, by which we are not only forbidden to bear any false witness, but are enjoined to have our speeches agree with our minds, and our actions to bear a true testimony to our words, *to lay aside all guile and hypocrisy.* Lastly, The simplicity here required implies a freedom from all envying and evil speaking. Envy fours mens minds, and imbitters their tongues.

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* Prov. 4. 16.

Ill-will never speaks well, but aggravates all mis-carriages, and therefore to cure these vices of the tongue, we must discard all spite and envy from our minds, so prejudicial to the good name of our neighbours, and learn that charity, which envieth not, and will not suffer us to think or speak amiss of any.

Thus we see what is forbidden, and what required in this commandment; to the former belong all the wicked arts of impairing or hurting our neighbour's credit; to the latter appertain all the good and christian methods of promoting and preserving their reputation. For the better observing our duty herein, it will not be amiss to recommend the advice of St. Paul, *Study to be quiet, and do your own business* *. Now study implies an earnest intention of mind, accompanied with diligent enquiry and endeavours after something; and the apostle making quietness a matter of study, shews the excellency of it, and that it is worth studying, to attain it. That it is worth our study, the many benefits we reap from peace, and the various miseries that flow from contention, may easily satisfy us. And if we would preserve each other's good name, let us mind our own business, and not intermeddle with other mens; for they who thrust themselves into other peoples concerns, generally make bold with their reputation, assuming all wisdom to themselves, and scarce allowing others enough to understand or manage their own affairs. Hence the apostle joins *busy-bodies and tatlers together*; adding, that they *wander about from house to house not only idle, but tatlers, and speaking what they ought not* ||. To conclude then this commandment, we are here directed to avoid all unjust ways of lessening, or detracting from the honour or reputation of our neighbour, which is *bearing false witness against him*; and

* 1 Thes. 4. 11. || 1 Tim. 5. 13.

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and likewise to do all the right and service we lawfully can to his good name, which is bearing true testimony to and for him.

DISCOURSE XL. Dr. Hole.

The tenth commandment.

Exod. 20. 17.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man servant nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

THESE words contain the tenth and last commandment in the decalogue; the design whereof is to regulate the inward thoughts and desires of the heart, and to keep them from all unlawful lusting or coveting what is another's. The former precepts expressly relate to the outward man, restraining the external acts of violence and injustice; but this extends to the inward man, putting a check to all secret unlawful desires, tho' they never come into act, and refining the heart, which is the spring of all evil, from all unjust inclinations; for *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies* †. Indeed, all the laws of God are spiritual, for they reach and effect the heart; and therefore our Saviour in expounding the commandments,

† Mat. 15. 19.

mandments, declares, that all internal motions to sin are prohibited; as well as the outward acts.

God in this commandment expressly arraigns the thoughts, and condemns the very intention of our hearts, towards what is evil; *thou shalt not covet.* He requires us not to deprive our neighbour of his right, nor even to wish or desire it; and to abstain, not only from all unjust actions, but from all covetous inclinations. For this law forbids the sin of covetousness, or an inordinate lusting after, or desiring what belongs to another. There may be an honest and regular desire of others goods, when confined to just and lawful means of obtaining it; since without this, there can be no traffick or commerce. None will buy or purchase any thing of another, unless he has a mind thereto; trade and commerce depend on the liking and desiring one another's goods. But then there are besides, irregular desires, whereby men covet the goods of others, and would unjustly obtain them; and such are gross violations of this commandment. Some things of our neighbours cannot lawfully be parted with, others not without great loss, inconveniencies, or reluctancy; in such cases, to desire our neighbour's goods, is an evil covetousness; and which leads me to consider the several objects of concupiscence mentioned in this command.

We are forbidden to *covet our neighbour's house*; that is, not only his habitation, but whatever he is rightfully possessed of; these he ought quietly to enjoy, without any secret wishes or desires of ours after them? 'Twas *Ahab's* sin to covet *Naboth's* vineyard, and we shall be as guilty to covet our neighbour's house, or farm, unless in an honest way, when the owner is willing legally to part with them, on terms that are just and right. We are forbidden to *covet our neighbour's wife*, because this should not be, for *whom God hath joined together,*

ther, let no man put asunder. No consent of parties can dissolve the bonds of wedlock, or violate the laws of chastity; and therefore all such desires must be sinful; for they being made one by mutual agreement and God's institution, their hearts must not stray from each other, nor others run towards them. To covet or withdraw the affection of either, is a manifest breach of the laws of God and nature. We are forbidden to *covet our neighbour's servant*, whether *man or maid*. For these are part of our neighbour's goods, made so by mutual covenant and promise; and by the laws of God and man, he hath a right to their labour and service, which none may lawfully desire or deprive him of. Indeed a master and servant may lawfully part by consent, or he may remove an idle unfaithful servant, and then they are free to any other; but none may secretly wish for, entice, or seduce another's servant, for this is a breach of justice and charity, and creates difference among neighbour's. This is to do to another, what we should not like to be done to us, and is very contrary to that love and kindness we ought to bear to one another. We are forbidden to *covet our neighbour's ox or ass*, that is, any of his cattle, flock, or herd. In these things our neighbour has so just a property as may not be invaded, so much as by a wish, for then it possibly would go farther; coveting will lead to purloin, and embezzle; for next to desiring is defrauding. And therefore this commandment checks the first motions and tendencies to such evil, for it cautions us not only against robbing and stealing our neighbour's cattle, but forbids all thoughts and desires leading thereto: Nay, so far from coveting or hurting his cattle, we are to save and succour them in all their wanderings; for our Saviour commands, that if our neighbour's ox or ass fall into a pit, we should help him out, and if he goes astray, to bring him

him home. Lastly, we are forbid to *covet any thing that is our neighbour's*; the former part of the command relates to things of weight and consequence; and that we might not think ourselves at liberty to desire the smallest matters belonging to our neighbour, 'tis added, *nor any thing that is his*. Some there are, who will own it unjust and unreasonable, to covet another's house, wife, servant, or cattle, and yet think a little corn, grass, wood, or apples, such trifles as not to be minded; and so are apt to indulge, not only their hearts in coveting, but also their hands in purloining of them. But this commandment corrects all such mistakes, by requiring us not to covet any thing that is our neighbour's, he having an equal right to small, as well as greater matters; and he that violates God's authority in the one, will soon do it in the other. For many by using to pilfer in little trifles, have proceeded to things of greater value; which should make men avoid the beginnings of this vice, and not to meddle with their neighbour's property in the lowest matters. Thus I have shewn the sin forbidden in this commandment.

But it must be remembered, as before observed, that all the motives and inducements to any sin, are also prohibited with the sin itself. And we shall find many evils condemned by this law, leading to the great sin of covetousness. As first, *discontent* with our present condition, is forbidden in this commandment, as an occasion of coveting; for he that likes not his own circumstances, will covet what he should not, and thinking he hath not enough, will be ever uneasy and desirous of more. Discontent deprives men of the comfort of what they enjoy: *Ahab* could take no pleasure in the glory and greatness of a kingdom, whilst he coveted *Naboth's* vineyard. For he came to his house heavy and displeased, he laid him down on his bed, turned away

away his face, and would eat no bread *. This folly leads men to fraud and injustice. The apostle declares, that they who being uneasy at their present fortunes, do covet to be rich, *fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown them in destruction and perdition.* Discontent with our condition, says the wise man, *frets the heart against the Lord* ; as if he dealt hardly with them, and denied to give what they desired or deserved. It makes them find fault with the dispensations of divine providence, as thinking other men's lot better than theirs ; and which leads first to coveting, and then purloining what is another's. *Envy* is another sin forbidden in this commandment, as an occasion of this evil concupiscence. This is an effect of the former, and naturally leads to covetousness. For he that is discontented with his own condition, will envy others, and that naturally begets inordinate desires and hankerings after it. This sin offers great indignity to God, for it will not allow him to dispose of his own blessings. The envious person would have things ordered, not by the wisdom of the divine will, but his own fancy and humour: He would be the sole carver of his own, and other men's fortunes, and therefore grudges and murmurs if any have more than he thinks proper ; which is a great affront to the wisdom and authority of our maker. It is also high injustice to our neighbour, to covet what is his, and repine at his prosperity, when we ought to rejoice thereat. Nor is it a small injury to a man's self, for it destroys the peace and tranquility of his mind, and deprives him of all the comfort he might reap from the prosperity of others ; this envious coveting of another's property, serving only to fret and gall his mind, to weaken his body, and bring leanness and rottenness into his bones. Another occasion

* 1 Kings 21. 3.

casion of coveting here forbidden, is an immoderate care and anxious solicitude for the things of this life; for which reason our Saviour gives a strict caution against it; says he, *take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?* Not that our Saviour here condemns all prudent, moderate care about earthly things, nor requires us to cast off all thoughts and concern for our body; we being commanded to *provide things honest in the sight of all men*, and not to be *slothful*, but *diligent in our business* †. But our Saviour's charge is, not to give way to any anxious, perplexing, or solicitous cares about these things; such as to distrust God's providence, or to put men upon inordinate desires and endeavours after what is not their own; for these destroy property, disturb the peace and order of the world, violate the laws of God, and bring destruction to the souls of men; and therefore our Saviour uses many arguments, whereby to cure such carking and immoderate cares.

For he sends us to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field, who *sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns*, and yet our heavenly Father *feedeth them*; and are not *we much better than they* ‡? To check all solicitous thoughts about meat and drink, he minds us of the provision made for all inferior creatures, how he *feeds the ravens*, and will not suffer a *sparrow to fall to the ground*; and can we think he will starve his own children? To cure all anxious cares about raiment, he sends us to the *lillies of the field*, to consider how they grow, they *toil not, neither do they spin*; and yet, says he, *Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these*; and if God so clothe the grass of the field that to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not

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† Rom. 12. 11. 17.

‡ Mat. 6. 26.

much more clothe us ||? Lastly, he shews the vanity of all such carking and distrustful cares, which can neither add *one cubit to our stature*, nor one grain to our estate without God's blessing; which will sooner be obtained by a devout dependance on his providence, than by all the anxious and indirect arts of our own contrivance. These, together with idleness and pride, are the principal motives and occasions of that sinful concupiscence, condemned in this commandment, which we must carefully watch against, as the enemies of our souls, and the obstacles of our salvation. In a word, let us subdue the first motions of discontent, envy, and ambition, which will otherwise betray us into greater evils; for by suffering our hearts to covet, we let loose our hands to picking and stealing, and shall thereby incur the miseries and punishments both of this life and the next.

Having considered the negative part of this commandment, which forbids all coveting or desiring what belongs to others; I shall now proceed to the affirmative part of it, which instructs us in what is required; namely, contentment with our own condition, according to the apostle, *let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have* *. In treating of this great duty, I will shew the nature of contentment; the reasonableness of it; and lastly, propose some directions for attaining it.—Contentment is such a satisfaction of mind in any condition, as to be easy to one's self and others. True contentment springs from the mind; it ariseth not from the abundance of outward things, which often brings disquiet, but from the inward frame and disposition of the soul, that thankfully enjoys, and prudently acquiesces, in whatever portion is allotted. Therefore St. Paul declares, that *he coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel,*

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|| Mat. 6. 28, 30



apparel, but had learned to be content with his own estate †. Indeed, with any estate that should happen to him; for he *knew how to be abased, as well as how to abound; both to be full and to be hungry, to abound and suffer need* †. Contentment is such a well-pleasedness with our condition, as to render us easy to ourselves. *The good man, saith Solomon, shall be satisfied from himself.* He hath such a spring of joy and peace from within, as keeps him from murmuring and repining, and makes him chearfully to receive whatever God is pleased to allot him. And the good effect of this virtue, not only renders him easy to himself, but to all others. For contentment preserves us from all the evil effects of envy, and makes us rather to rejoice, than repine at another's prosperity.

But the reasonableness of this virtue of contentment will more plainly appear, if we consider, that whatever our state and condition may be, yet 'tis allotted us by God, the sovereign disposer of all things, from whose bounty flows all that we receive. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,* which he bestows on the sons of men, as he thinks fit. We are debtors to him for our very being; we are made by his power, and daily supported by his providence, for *in him we live, move, and have our being.* So that we ought rather to be contented and thankful for what we have, than murmur and complain for what we want. And as we can claim nothing as our due, neither can we challenge any thing as our desert; for we *are less than the least of all God's mercies,* and can merit nothing at his hands. We should therefore be content and receive with gratitude what we have. And if to the sovereign right and title of almighty God, we add the consideration of his wisdom and goodness, we shall see far greater reason to be content with our portion;

† Acts 20. 33.

† Phil. 4. 11, 12.

tion ; for what we have is allotted us by an all-wise and gracious hand, who knows what is better for us, than we can do for ourselves. We often wish and long for those things, that will do us more harm than good. But God in his wisdom best knows what is proper and fit for us, and dispenses his goodness to us in such proportion, as most tends to promote our welfare ; and therefore we ought, in point of interest, as well as conscience, humbly and thankfully to acquiesce in what he orders. For to be dissatisfied with our condition, is, in effect, to prefer our judgment to his, and to think ourselves wiser than God. And to be displeased with his allotment, is the ready way to forfeit our maker's favour, and provoke him to recall what we have, instead of giving more. Besides, there is a peculiar happiness attending contentment ; for a contented mind is always easy : it creates a constant calm, an undisturbed tranquillity within ; but discontent and envy, disquiet the mind, and raise a perpetual storm in the hearts of men. Content is true happiness, the blest estate of heaven, the joy of glorified saints, and of the spirits of just men made perfect ; who are not only pleased with their own joys and blessedness, but delighted with those of others : but discontent and envy are the passions and torment of wicked spirits, whose own uneasiness, like so many furies, makes them tear and devour one another.

Lastly, I shall prescribe some rules for the better attaining this excellent art of contentment. And as this useful virtue is seated chiefly in the mind, we must begin there, and endeavour to bring our minds to our condition. The reason why so few attain this art is, because they take not the right method. Men are solicitous enough to bring their estates to their minds, which being too large to be satisfied with earthly things, is a vain attempt ; for he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied

with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase *. But to act rightly, we must labour to bring our minds to our estate, and to rest satisfied with whatever the divine wisdom and goodness allots for us, which better knows what is fit for us, than we can do for ourselves. Again, in order to be content with our condition, we should consider that all earthly things are insufficient to make us happy. Some weakly imagine, that if they could arrive to such an estate, or attain such a degree of honour, dignity, and preferment in this world, they should then be so happy, as to be satisfied without seeking or desiring more ; and yet, when they have obtained their wish, they find their cares and troubles greater, and themselves more uneasy than before : And therefore, *Cyneas* the philosopher wisely told *Pyrrhus*, on his informing him of the designs he had on *Rome*, *Sicily*, and *Carthage*, that if he could not be content with his own kingdom, neither would he be satisfied with the whole world. Indeed such things will not satisfy us, for they rather increase, than allay the thirst of the soul. So that let the world flow ever so much upon us, our desires will run faster and exceed them. Wherefore it will be our wisdom to fix our affections on higher and better things.

To learn this lesson of contentment, we must subdue all pride and haughtiness of mind, for he that is highly opinionated will think he hath not what he deserves ; this will make him repine, desire more, and envy others : But he that has humble thoughts of himself, will be thankful and content with any thing. We must also be diligently employed in that business and calling wherein God hath placed us, for that will secure his blessing on our endeavours, and bring us content. *The blessing of God (saith Solomon) maketh rich, and bringeth no sorrow*

* Eccles. 5. 10.

sorrow with it. He who hath that, is rich in any condition, and doth not want a competency. 'Tis idleness that occasions want, covetous, and envious thoughts, which industry chases away and leaves no room for. We must also take care to live within the bounds of our estate; for he that exceeds it, will contract debts that unavoidably lead to danger and discontent. Frugality, temperance, and honesty are excellent helps to contentment, there being a blessing annexed to these things, which brings peace to the mind, and prosperity to our affairs; but extravagancy and dishonesty are ever attended with a curse, which disquiets the mind, diminishes the substance, and lays a foundation for misery and trouble. Again, if we would get and preserve a contented mind, we must more observe those who are below, than such as are above us; for the splendor of greatness is apt to dazzle the eye, to create envy and discontent. He that too much admires the wealth, honour, and power of another, will be easily induced to envy their happiness, and be discontented with his own condition; but if he looks below him, and considers how many want what he enjoys, this will teach him to be content and thankful for his own allotment. Nature is content with a little: He that lives by the necessities of nature is easily supplied; but he that feeds a carnal and sensual appetite, multiplies his wants, and makes artificial necessities, which drive away contentment. Lastly, to acquire this grace of contentment, we must learn to fix our trust and dependance on God, who hath promised never to leave nor forsake us. He alone is able to satisfy the cravings of our souls, to supply the wants and necessities of our bodies. All other things leave us when we most need them; they are of no use in times of sickness, the hour of death, or day of judgment; and therefore, let us not *trust in uncer-*

tain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.

Thus I have shewn what is required and forbidden in this and the other commandments; and the wise man's conclusion of the whole matter is, *fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man* †; and which our Saviour hath comprised in the love of God and our neighbour.

The fear of God will restrain us from *having any other Gods besides, or before him*, which is the first commandment. He that hath this holy awe and reverence for the divine majesty, will dread to offend him; either by the guilt of atheism, idolatry, or worshiping any rival deities. The sense of his power and greatness, as our Lord and master, will make us to honour and serve him only. The fear of God will keep us from worshiping him, contrary to his word and will, as by images or pictures, which is the thing forbidden in the second commandment. He that truly fears God, will not worship the creature, instead of the creator, much less give his glory to graven images. The sense of God's jealousy of a rival, and the vengeance he hath denounced against such, and their posterity, should teach us to worship God, as he hath commanded, *in spirit and in truth*. The fear of God will keep men from profaning his sacred name, and beget a veneration for it, which is the substance of the third commandment. The want of this holy fear and reverence, is what makes men venture so boldly to take God's name in vain, by rash and false swearing; to invade his property by sacrilege, to despise his ministers, and detain their maintenance from them; to pollute his sanctuary by profaneness, and to think meanly of persons, places and things, dedicated to his name: but did we stand in awe of God, as we ought, we should not dare to sin thus against him. Did we truly be-

• Eccles. 12. 13.

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lieve, the Lord will not hold them guiltless, that thus take his name in vain, we should more honour his holy name, and avoid detracting from it. Lastly, the fear of God will make us remember to keep holy the sabbath-day, and to have a due regard to the times set apart and devoted to his service, which is required by the fourth commandment. If we fear God, we shall not profane those days by working at our calling, much less by following the works of sin; but rather conscientiously rest from all our labours, the better to attend God's worship, and the exercises of religion: especially considering the liberal allowance God hath given us, of six days in the week for our use, and reserving only one in seven, for his own service. And surely he that hath any fear of God, or honour for him, will be afraid and ashamed to deny him this. Thus we see how the fear of God runs thro' the first table of the law, and at once comprizes and enforces the duties we owe to God.

The next thing to be considered, is the duties we owe our neighbour, contained in the commandments of the second table, which are only performed by keeping of them. By observing the fifth commandment, we discharge our duty to all our superiors; which is to honour our parents, both natural and civil, and to obey those that are set over us in church and state; to which we are encouraged by the promise of long life here, and eternal bliss hereafter. By keeping the sixth commandment, we perform the duty we owe to one another's lives, and the body and soul of both; which is to take the best care we can of the health, safety, and welfare of each, and avoid maiming, murdering, and destroying of either. By observing the seventh commandment, we discharge the duty we owe to our neighbour's wife; we abstain from all uncleanness in thought, word, and deed; and keep our

vessels in sanctification and honour; we preserve a pure and inviolable chastity, and are thereby true to our marriage vows and promises. By observing the eighth commandment, we perform the duty we owe to our neighbour's goods and substance; which is not to *steal*, take away, or withhold his right from him; not to over-reach him by any methods of fraud or deceit, nor lessen his substance by robbery or oppression; but to use our best endeavours to preserve, promote, and advance his prosperity. By keeping the ninth commandment, we discharge the duty we owe to the credit and good name of our neighbour; which is, not to blast it, by bearing false witness, lying, slander, and defamation; nor to undermine it by secret whispering, tale-bearing, and backbiting: but as much as possible to silence all villifying, and detracting language of other men; to vindicate every one from unjust aspersions, and endeavour to preserve the reputation of others. Lastly, by the tenth commandment, we are restrained from all unjust covetous desires, and from indirectly obtaining what belongs to our neighbours; and are thereby taught to be content with what is truly and honestly ours, and willing that all others should also enjoy what is their right and property. Thus as our duty to God, is included in the *fear* of him, so our duty to our neighbour is contained in *keeping the commandments*; which two things are so full and comprehensive, that the wise man calls them, *the whole of man*.

For this is the whole *duty, end, and happiness* of man. This is the whole work and business incumbent on man, and about which we are to employ ourselves in this world; not that we are to neglect the duties of our calling, and to have our minds always on religion; but that we must make it our main and chief business, and prefer it above all other. *To fear God, and keep his commandments,*

ments, is a matter of universal concern, to all men ; none is exempted, this being the whole duty, or principal business that belongs to every man. *This* is the *end* of man ; for God gave him faculties above other creatures, that he should honour, fear, and obey him. He is not distinguished from brute beasts, so much by reason, as by religion and the fear of God. So that this is the whole essence and end of man. And to fear God, and keep his commandments, will qualify and prepare us for happiness, and secure to us our future bliss. It will raise our natures to their highest perfection, and conform us to the divine nature, which nothing but the practice of religion and virtue can do. So that this is the whole work and business, the end and design, the interest and happiness of man ; all which are so many powerful arguments to persuade us to the practice of it.

From what hath been said, let us learn to live always in the fear of God, and that will keep us to our duty. Let us often meditate on the infinite power of God, which is able to punish all offences ; for *if we set him always before us, we shall never do evil*. Let us not fear men, whose power can reach no farther than the body or goods, but *fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell* *. Let us consider and reflect on his impartial justice, and frequently have in remembrance his infinite mercy, that we may *fear the Lord for his goodness*, and dread to offend his justice. Let us live in constant obedience to his commands ; then shall we perform our duty to our neighbour, and thereby *keep a conscience, void of offence, both towards God and man*. For what doth the Lord our God require of us, but to *fear and to serve him, to walk in his ways, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man* ; al-

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* Luke 12. 4, 5.

ways remembering, that God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or evil.

DISCOURSE XLI. Abp. Sharpe.

Of our love to God.

Matt. 22. 37.

—*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.*

THE question which the lawyer asked our Saviour, in all probability, was one of those, that was then much controverted among the Jewish doctors, as to which commandment, was the greatest in the law of *Moses*: some teaching that the law of circumcision; others, that the law of sacrifices; others, that the moral duties of the law, those of the loving God, and our neighbour, were the greatest commandments: and of this latter opinion was the lawyer himself, and our Saviour confirmed him therein, by this answer; *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets* *. Intimating, that the foundation of all religion, is first the love of God, and next the love of our neighbour. All the other duties, prescribed by *Moses*, and the prophets, are summed up in these two, and

* Mark 12. 30, 31.

and may be reduced to them. He that saith love God, and our neighbour, in effect tells us the whole of our duty; all other points of religion being comprehended and contained therein. My design at this time is to consider the first and great commandment; that of *loving God, with all our heart, soul and strength*. And I shall first explain, what is meant by loving God; then shew in what respects, and upon what grounds this is the first and greatest commandment; and lastly, make some inferences from the whole.

As to the first, every one so well knows what is meant by love, it being a dictate of nature, that it would be impertinent, to give instruction therein. But as there is a difference between divine and sensual love; the love of God, and of worldly things, it will be proper to consider both. And it must be observed, that the latter is usually attended with much greater transports of passion than the former: tho' if the love of God be sincere, it will produce as real and visible effects, as the love of any sensible object in the world can do. Not that any should measure their love to God, by what they perceive in themselves towards visible objects; and imagine that they do not sincerely love God, because they feel not such violent transports of fear and hope, desires and longings, joy and delight, impatience and uneasiness, as perhaps they experience, when their hearts have been set upon things and persons on earth. For the love of God is not so passionate, as animal, sensual love; but it is as real and permanent, as strong and effectual, as the other, only more still and calm. And the reason is plain, because the one flows from our intellectual, reasonable nature; the other from our sensual, animal affections. And yet it may sometimes happen, that the more ardently, and intensely, a man loves God, the more will his animal passions conspire

with that love, and be as vigorous on all occasions to express it, as if they were employed about some visible object. Holy *David* seems to have been thus affected. His love and devotion to God was expressed with violent raptures of passion, equal to the highest sensual love; but as this is a temper to be found in few, therefore I shall give such an account of our loving God, as may be true, without that fervor of passion. And there are several things, that seem necessarily required to the true and sincere love of God, even from them who are the least susceptible of passionate expressions. As that we have a great esteem of God; that we earnestly desire to partake of his perfections; and that we heartily endeavour to obtain his favour, by doing whatever is pleasing to him.

The first thing implied in the love of God, is to have a great and just esteem for him. To have such worthy apprehensions concerning God, such certain and well-grounded persuasions, of his adorable perfections, of his infinite goodness, love and kindness to us, as that we may conceive him to be the best, the most excellent and amiable of beings. Such is the make of human nature, that we cannot love any thing, of which we have not some knowledge and apprehension, and such as represents the object to be lovely and desirable. Our opinion and fancy first leads the way, and then follow desire and affection. So that in order to our sincere loving of God, we must labour to know something of his nature, to consider him as the most amiable of all beings; and then we cannot but place our hearts and affections on him. When once God appears to us, what he really is in himself, the possessor of all perfections, the fountain of all good, the author of all that happiness, we now enjoy, or can hope for hereafter. When once we are truly persuaded, that every good and desirable thing is
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in God, absolutely and most perfectly; and that all the excellencies we admire in this world, all the delightful things that here attract our hearts, are every one of them, but so many rivulets derived from the inexhaustible ocean of his perfections; are so many scanty and imperfect emanations from his infinite fulness: and that what is here most glorious, beautiful, and excellent, is but a faint shadow, a very defective copy and representation of his eternal goodness, glory, and blessedness. When we have such apprehensions of his nature, as to believe there is nothing frightful or unlovely in God; that he is perfect light, and such a being, as all reasonable creatures, who have any knowledge of him, must for ever love. A being, which was it possible to suppose there is not, yet all wise and good men would heartily wish there was. Lastly, when we have such an idea of God, as to conceive that the enjoyment of him, is our supreme happiness; that in possessing him we shall participate of every thing that is good and desirable: all pleasure, riches, and honour, being to be had by obtaining his favour. I say, when we have such just and right notions and apprehensions of God as these, then, and not before, do we begin to love him; then will our souls cleave to him; then shall we cry out with *David, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth, that I can desire in comparison with thee.* So that the first expression of love to God, is a just apprehension of, and esteem for him. But sincerely to love God also implies an earnest desire of being made partakers of his perfections. It is an inseparable property of love, to excite a strong desire and inclination in others, to be like in temper, and to imitate the virtues of the person beloved. It is ridiculous to talk of loving, and admiring a person, for any excellent accomplishment, when we at the same time, behave directly

rectly contrary to what we see in him. If therefore we will sincerely love God, we should endeavour to be like him in all his imitable perfections. We should so admire his wisdom and purity, justice and mercy, faithfulness and truth, as to think it our greatest interest, to become righteous and merciful, wise and pure, faithful and true, as we find him to be. We should look upon sin, wickedness, and impurity, as the greatest blemishes, the worst evils in the world. We should not suffer in ourselves any humour, habit, or custom, that is opposite to his rectitude and goodness. But we should breathe after a participation of his nature; hunger and thirst after righteousness; and endeavour to bring our minds and spirits to a conformity, in all things, with those ideas we have of him: so as to be heartily in love with virtue, goodness, and all other qualities that can accomplish our souls, and render us like our maker. And from hence will follow, a serious care to approve and recommend ourselves to God, in all our actions. As love naturally inclines us to imitate, and be like in temper to the person we love; so our carriage, behaviour, and conversation, should be made pleasing and acceptable to the beloved object. For, can we, with any justice, pretend we love our friend, when we constantly make it our business, in his sight and presence, to do what we know he hates. And this is our case with God. He is not indeed properly injured, or receives any damage by what we do; our best services neither giving any addition to his glory and infinite happiness, nor our worst actions detracting therefrom; but only, that as some of our actions are highly pleasing and acceptable to him, so others are the quite contrary; and which he regards as an affront and dishonour done him. And that we might without difficulty be able to distinguish between these, he hath given

us his laws and commandments, as a rule whereby to govern our actions and conversations; which laws are partly imprinted on our hearts, and partly revealed to us, in his holy word. If therefore we love God, we must sincerely endeavour in all our actions to observe these laws; for if we allow ourselves in the open transgression of them, we cannot pretend to love God, since we plainly affront him. Here then let us fix, and by this try our love to God. Do we sincerely strive to keep his commandments? Is it the study and design of our lives, to frame our actions agreeably to the rule God hath given us? and do we constantly avoid, to the best of our power, the doing what we know is plainly repugnant to God's laws? This is declared in scripture to be the most proper expression, and surest argument of our love to God. Thus in the second commandment, *I will shew mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.* And our Saviour saith, *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me* *. And the apostle, *Who so keepeth his word, in him is the love of God perfected.*

And as every man may know, whether in his life and conversation, he sincerely endeavours to observe God's laws, to perform what he hath commanded, and avoid what he forbids; so from hence may all be satisfied, whether or no they truly love God. It is not a warmth and fervour, which we sometimes feel towards God, a great joy and delight in our spiritual exercises, earnest and devout affections in our contemplations and prayers, that should make us conclude, we sincerely love God; for all this zeal and heat of affection, without an uniform obedience to all his commands, will avail nothing. On the other hand, if we are dull and flat in our prayers, and feel none of those raptures,
spiritual

* John 14. 21.

spiritual consolations, and lively communion with God, that other men speak of; let us not be troubled and think we have not the true love of God: for notwithstanding the want of these things, if we live honestly, virtuously, and godly, *the love of God abideth in us*. In a word, let all sorts of men, however lively or dull their passions and affections may be towards God, judge of their state and condition by this; do they heartily and steadily endeavour to approve themselves to God by an innocent, virtuous, and religious course of life? do they make a conscience of keeping all God's commandments, to the utmost of their knowledge and ability? do they knowingly and willingly indulge themselves, in no action or course of life, that their conscience tells them, is displeasing to God? If they can satisfy themselves in all this, such persons have the greatest reason in the world, to be assured they love God, in the degree he will accept; and if they enjoy not the comfort of it here, they will nor fail of receiving a reward for it hereafter.——I now proceed to shew in what respect, and upon what grounds, the loving of God, is the first and greatest commandment; and this appears from the following reasons.

That it is in the order of nature, prior to and before the other commandments; the very foundation of them, and from whence the other duties of the law derive their obligation. For instance; the duty we owe to our neighbour, in being just and faithful, merciful and charitable, quiet and peaceable; the duty we owe ourselves, in being chaste, modest and temperate: all these are necessary, indispensable duties. But how come they so? is it, because they are things reasonable in themselves, agreeable to our nature, and that the practice of them, is a probable means to make our lives more easy and comfortable? Now admitting this true, and
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that they are considerable motives to engage us to practise them ; yet, strictly speaking, neither of them is sufficient to lay a direct obligation on us, without the authority of the great God ; who hath made these things to be our duty, who hath prescribed it as a law to us, to be just and charitable, chaste and temperate, and the like. So that were we not bound in conscience to serve and love God, neither should we be obliged to practise those other duties. The truth is, was there no God, whom we ought to love and serve, there would be no such thing as love and conscience in the world. It is the consideration of God in any action, that makes it good or bad ; and it is the influence of God's authority, that in point of conscience, makes any thing a sin or duty : and therefore since to love God is our first duty, as what gives the stamp of conscience and religion to all the rest, it must needs be the first and greatest commandment. Again,

The loving God with all our hearts and souls, is the greatest law, in regard of its excellency and dignity, as it employs and exercises the powers of our souls, on the highest and noblest object. To love God is certainly the greatest perfection and accomplishment of human nature ; by it we become like unto God, and are made partakers of his divine nature.—In a word, the blessedness of mankind consists in the divine life, and the root of that, is the sincere love of God. Whoever truly loves God cannot but be happy ; and whoever doth not, must be miserable, because he is at a distance from the greatest good. To love God is to be put in possession of all that God can bestow ; for it engages his wisdom and power, his care and providence in our favour ; our security and happiness, rest and peace, joy and delight, do attend upon it. And therefore since the love of God is the sum of our feli-

felicity, it must in reason also be the sum of our religion; the first and greatest of all the commandments. Because our hearty love of God gives worth and value to all our other religious performances. Love doth of itself recommend us to our heavenly father. Our prayers and fasting, our attendance on his worship, our moral honesty, our acts of mercy and charity, will never recommend us to God, and be acceptable to him, if at the same time we have no true love to him, nor any real affection for his commandments, but do these things out of vain-glory, to be seen of men; or to procure a reputation of sanctity, to please others, or to serve our private interest, and designs. But whoever heartily loves God, and endeavours in all his actions to approve himself to him; such a one never fails of God's acceptance, in every instance of duty he applies himself to; every service he offers is kindly taken, and the more his sincere love is expressed, the more value God puts upon it. Since therefore the love of God, is of such universal influence, and so necessarily productive of obedience to all God's laws, there is great reason for its being called, the first and great commandment. I now proceed to draw some inferences, and apply what has been said.

The first thing I would take occasion to observe, is this: that religion, as it signifies that universal duty we owe to God, and by which we are to recommend ourselves to his favour, is not so variable, uncertain, and arbitrary a thing as some men do suppose; but it is constant, fixed, permanent, and immutable: the same now that it was in the days of the old law; the same then that it was in the days before the law was given; and the same both then and now, and as it will be a thousand years hence, if the world so long continues. True religion that is from God, was, is, and ever will be

be the same as to substance and essentials, in all countries and nations, and among all sorts and conditions of men whatsoever. The sum of it is, to love the Lord our God, with all our hearts, with all our minds, and with all our strength; and next to that, to love our neighbour as ourselves. This was the religion that the patriarchs, and all the pious men of old lived in, and by which they obtained God's favour and acceptance, even when there was no revealed instituted religion in the world. And this, our Saviour tells us, was the substance of that religion, which God, when he thought fit to discover his will by revelation, gave to the *Israelites* by *Moses*, and which he continued by a perpetual succession of prophets to press upon them. This also is the sum of that religion, which hath Jesus Christ for its author, who was the last and the greatest prophet, that came to declare God's will to mankind; and whose religion is to continue in force for ever. And that this is the substance of the Christian religion, no man can in the least doubt, who ever read the new testament. For if our Saviour could truly affirm, that the sum of the *Jewish* religion, as delivered by *Moses*, and the prophets, did consist in those two things, *the love of God, and our neighbour*; I am sure we have much greater reason to say, that the religion which he taught, may be summed up in these two duties: because in the *Jewish* law, there were a great many precepts about matters of an indifferent nature, that seemed wholly foreign, and unlike to that of loving God and our neighbour; but in our institution, there is hardly any one thing recommended to us, that doth not directly relate to this matter; that is not either an instance, wherein we are to express our love to God and our neighbours; or a means to help us in the practice of those duties; or an argument, motive, or encouragement,

agement, to excite us to perform them. It is the design of all his doctrines to give us right notions of God and our neighbour; to teach us how excellent, how good God is in himself, and how kind and gracious to us. And therefore, what infinite reason have we to love and serve him; and to love and serve all mankind, who are our neighbours, for his sake? It is the design of his precepts, to give us rules in what manner and degree we are to express our love to God, and our neighbour, and to oblige us, under the highest penalty, not to fail of our duty in these matters. It is also the design of his promises, to encourage us in the constant and sincere performance of these duties, notwithstanding any temptations we may meet with to the contrary, by offering to us greater assistance to perform them, and proposing greater rewards for doing it, than mankind had ever before. And lastly, it was the design of his whole life and conversation on earth, to give us a true pattern and example of love to God and man, in the several instances required from us. Love therefore, as it was the sum of the old law, so is it of the new. The end, the perfection, the utmost design of the evangelical dispensation, is to teach us to love God first, and then our neighbour, *out of a pure heart, and good conscience, and faith unfeigned* *. So that religion is not a thing to be altered at pleasure; and the law of nature, the law of God, the natural dispensation, under which all men are born, and the revealed dispensation in the old and new testament, do sufficiently instruct us in the main heads of it. And so long as mankind retain their nature, and continue as God made them at first, it is impossible there should be any true religion, but what may be summed up in these two things; to love God and our neighbour.

Indeed,

* 1 Tim. 1. 5.

Indeed, there is this difference between the three dispensations, that of nature, that of *Moses*, and that of *Christ*, as to this matter; namely, that the first teacheth these duties very imperfectly. Mankind, thro' the universal corruption and degeneracy of the world, had lost the true notions of God, and of the way wherein he would be loved and served. And therefore the design of the second dispensation, that of *Moses*, was to restore and revive these notions among the Jews, and to oblige them more strictly to the performance of those duties, by more explicit promises and threatnings. But yet this dispensation of *Moses* was very imperfect, and insufficient, for the bringing all mankind to that pure love of God and man, that was required to the perfection of human nature. And therefore when the fulness of time was come, God sent his own Son, our lord *Jesus Christ*, into the world, not to alter the principles of mankind, or set up a religion, that was never heard of in the world; but to perfect what was deficient in the law of nature, or of *Moses*, to build upon and improve the old foundation of loving God and our neighbour; that so all mankind might be put into a capacity, of performing acceptable services to God, and arriving to that perfection and happiness, which in their creation, they were designed for. This work our Saviour undertook, and which he did effectually perform and execute; 1. by instructing mankind more plainly and perfectly than ever they were before, how, and in what instances, they ought to express their love to God and man; and by requiring from them, a greater measure, degree, and intenseness of love, both to God and man, than the world before did think themselves obliged to. 2. By offering a great number of new arguments, motives and inducements, to the practice of those duties, which they scarce ever thought
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on before; and by procuring greater aids, helps, and assistances, for the performance of their duty, than was ever afforded, under either of the other dispensations. 3. By setting a plain and easy, but withal a perfect example, in his own life, of the practice of these duties, in all the several instances of them; and by proposing greater rewards to all good men, who sincerely endeavour to recommend themselves by universal love to God and man, than either the light of nature, or the law of *Moses* did ever make. And lastly, by purchasing remission of sins by his death and passion, for the encouragement of all mankind, seriously to practise this true religion, how negligent soever they had before been in these matters.

This to me seems a true scheme, and genuine representation of the Christian religion. And as to the main duties required by the religion of Christ, it seems to be the same in substance, with the religion of nature, and that of the Jews; and the sum of them both lies in this, to love God with all our hearts, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. But as to the instances of expressing these duties, the strictness it requires, the arguments used to engage us to them, the assistance offered for performing them, and the inestimable promises made to all who observe them; in all these respects there is no comparison to be made, between Christ's religion and the others: Christianity having abundantly the advantage, upon every one of these accounts, both of the Heathen and Jewish religion. All that I intend from what has been observed, is to evince that religion is not a fictitious, arbitrary thing; this day one thing, and another to-morrow; in this kingdom different from what it is elsewhere; but that the true religion, the religion that is of God, is eternally the same, and consists in this,

That

Disc. XLI. *Of the love of our neighbour.* 239

That we love the lord our God, with all our hearts, with all our mind, and with all our soul; and that we love our neighbour as ourselves.

DISCOURSE XLII. Bp. Burnet.

Of the love of our neighbour.

Mat. 22. 39, 40.

And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self; on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

AS the first and main principles of arts and sciences are chiefly to be valued, because when we are masters of them, they lead unto many things that are readily drawn from them; and these render the other parts of those arts and sciences easy in practice; so it is also with relation to our duty to God. If we have such a sense of his attributes and perfections, more particularly of his goodness and mercy, and of those blessings we continually receive from him, as to make us *love him with all our soul, and with all our strength*; then every act that terminates on him, as our trust, hope, resignation and submission; and every part of the worship and service that we owe to him, will rise easily, and come from us with joy and delight. And therefore this is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it, both in its importance, and happy effects. If our natures are brought

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brought to a temper that is all love and goodness, then we become like God, *who is love*; and if our souls dwell in love, then we dwell in God, and God in us. This principle will be also fruitful of every good work. It will make us readily perform the duties of all the relations, in which we stand. And because *love worketh no ill to his neighbour* *, therefore it is the fulfilling of the law, for, it is comprehended and fulfilled in this one word, *Love*; which will prompt us to a chearful and ready performance of every office, whether, of justice or charity, that we owe to our neighbour. All the best things we do, if without this inward principle, are either done hypocritically, to be seen of men, or at best, some other considerations force them from us; but they cannot arise naturally, and with joy, but as they flow from love. Without love a narrowness of soul will shut us up within ourselves, and make all we do to others, only as a sort of merchandize, trading for our own advantage. It is love only that opens our hearts, to consider other persons, and to love them on their own account, or rather for the sake of God, who is love.

This precept was part of the law of *Moses*; *thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him* †. If we see any person in a state of sin, to whom we have such access, that we may reprove him for it, but are willing to let him continue in it, that he may be thereby lessened in the esteem of the world; we shew a high degree of hatred, if we let him go on in an ill course, and the sin will in some sort lie upon us; and so the words may be rendered, *thou shalt not bear sin for him*. To this is added, *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people*; the one relates to the desire, the other to acts of revenge; but thou shalt

* Rom. 13. 8, 9, 10. Gal. 5. 14. † Lev. 17. 18.

shalt love thy neighbour as thy self; this gives a particular weight to the precept. The word *neighbour*, the Jews explained by, *the children of thy people*. So they who were commanded to avoid all intimacy or society with idolaters, thought, that by neighbour, none but an *Israelite* could be meant; all others were counted by them, strangers and enemies. Our Saviour, as he carried the moral obligations much higher, and gave them a greater extent than the Jews did; so by the parable of the *Samaritan*, he shewed that the word neighbour, did not mean only the men of one nation or one religion; but that a proper object, of what nation or religion soever, being brought in our way, it ought to make us pay this debt of love to him. So that neighbourhood does now comprehend all mankind.

And our Saviour does not only raise the value of such love, both by calling it *a new commandment*, which he gave his disciples, and by making it such a badge and cognizance, *that all men might know whether they were his disciples or not, if they had love one to another* †; but he has also raised the obligation yet higher, by the standard he has given of our love to the brethren; *as I have loved you, so love one another*. When we consider the extent of that expression, *as I have loved you*; both in respect to the infinite dignity of him who so loved us, and the unworthiness of us, whom he has so loved; and as to the wonderful instances and endearing effects of his love, in that *he gave himself for us*, and bore our sins on his own body, that he might thereby redeem and deliver us from the punishment of sin, by reconciling us to his father: We must acknowledge that *here is love indeed*, and a perfect pattern proposed to our imitation. He has made all mankind our neighbours, and all Christians our brethren, whom we ought to *love with a pure heart*

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servently.

† John 13. 35. John. 15. 12.

ferrently. But tho' we should exclude none from our love, yet some have a right to a higher measure of it; for such, in whom we see the likeness of God, are intitled to the largest share of it, in proportion to the degrees of that goodness we see in them.

The only difficulty to be cleared, is, the meaning and importance of the words, *as ourselves*. It seems hard and almost above the power of man, if not contrary to the law of nature, to love any other person, much more to love all our neighbours, as ourselves. Nature seems to have stamp'd such a principle of love in us, that it looks like a stretch beyond our force, to love another *as ourselves*. But *as* does not here import an equality; an imitation or resemblance will fully answer its signification. We are required to be holy, *as he who called us is holy, in all manner of conversation; and to purify ourselves even as he is pure* *. And our Saviour said, *be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect*. But since we cannot rise up in holiness and purity, to an equality with Christ, much less can we be *perfect, as God is perfect*; we see that *as* in those places, means only a conformity or similitude; or the proposing of God and Christ to our imitation, as the pattern after which we ought to frame our thoughts and actions. So here, the meaning of loving our neighbour as ourselves is, that as we feel nature teaches us to love ourselves with much tenderness and care, industry and zeal; to have a quick sense of all our concerns, and great solicitude about every thing that relates to us; so we ought to love our neighbour with a sincere and hearty affection, bearing a share of all his burthens, and employing ourselves with an active diligence to procure his real good and happiness; with a love of the same sort as that

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* 1 Pet. 1. 15. 1 John. 3. 3. Mat. 5. 48.

we bear to ourselves, tho' not to the same degree; in a word, the doing to others what we would that others should do to us. This is what we owe at all times, to all men, as God in his providence puts them in our way, to become our neighbours. But on some occasions we are required to love them in a stricter sense, *as ourselves*, nay even with a preference. We are commanded to be kindly affectioned one to another, *in honour preferring one another* †. We ought to esteem others better than ourselves, and to be ready when the circumstances of providence call us to it, to lay down our lives for the good of others. For tho' it is an extravagant stretch of love, now indeed seldom required, and not often in our power, willingly to suffer death for the sake of others, or for promoting the glory of God; yet as some generous minds, out of love to their country, or friends, have sacrificed their own lives for their good; so this brotherly love, when raised to some higher degrees than is now common among us, did often in the first ages of Christianity, make Christians expose themselves to the most exquisite torments for the sake of others. But as it is not the lot of Christians now, to suffer much for the faith, so there are not many instances of it, even in times of persecution. Thus we see what is meant by loving our neighbour, *as ourselves*.

In the next place it is necessary to examine the several acts and instances, in which this love of ours ought to consist. And to animate our zeal in each of these, we ought to consider what obligations we are under of mutual love to one another. Among men, those of the same kindred, household and family, reckon themselves strictly bound to love one another. But we are all brethren, derived from one common original; our bodies are all of the same mould, our souls all come from one

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father

† Rom. 12. 10.

father of spirits and fountain of life. We all partake of one nature, and however distinguished by our birth, yet we are all upon a level as to every thing that is essential. We ought therefore to despise none, tho' below us, because of the depression of their fortune; since those accidental things come and go by such secret springs, and often so very unaccountably, that we ought never to measure or value ourselves by any thing, but what is inseparable from, or belonging to us. We are neither better nor worse for having them or not, only so far as we make good or bad use of them. We ought therefore to consider ourselves as partakers of the same being with others, and therefore to bear a share with them, in their common concerns, and to love them as parts of our selves. It is usual and frequent in profane authors, as well as the scriptures, to compare the societies of men, to a body; and every individual to a member of that body. And as every member that is not possessed with a concern for, and ready inclinations to serve the whole body, is esteemed a dead member; so every man who is not endued with humanity and bowels of compassion towards others, has lost one of the best ingredients of his composition, and will soon grow stupid or savage.

Another reason for this mutual tenderness, is the common interest of mankind, that it should universally prevail; and which may not improperly be called, the voice and law of nature. Man is a necessitous and helpless creature, wanting the aid and assistance of different sorts of persons. God has also given to men different talents, capacities, and inclinations, that they might be useful to one another. No man is of such an exalted station, who does not or may not want the assistance of those who are far below him. There must be a circulation of mutual advices and assistances, and nothing

thing so much promotes it, as love. It both commands, and by a happy infection, spreads and insinuates itself into others, and engagingly melts them, to make such returns as are in their power. A man that is governed by love, feels, that as it subdues himself, so it does others. For generally speaking, men are so made, that they who can resist fear and force, cannot stand before love. And a person so influenced may depend not only on the providence of God, but even on the equity and good nature of mankind. But that which most particularly recommends this love, is, that God, who by all this goodness to us, has a just right and title to our love, requires from us the love of our brethren and neighbours, as the most suitable expression of our love to him. For tho' we can add nothing to his glory, nor offer him any thing but what we receive from his beneficence; yet it will engage every grateful mind to express a just sense of those favours, that can never be repaid. And the acknowledgements of them, will be considered as a repayment. *David* under the tenderest impressions of the goodness of God, and of the insufficiency of the returns he could make, that they could never extend to God, yet knew where to apply his gratitude, *even to the excellent ones, to the saints, in whom was all his delight* †. For he both delighted in, and did them good. The peculiar excellency of our nature, as well as a main part of God's image on us, is our having a capacity to love. And as we feel a noble enlargement and extent of soul, when we diffuse our love to others, so we insensibly become perfecter and happier, the more entirely we love others, and are beloved by them. Nor do the extravagant follies, that are owing to the excesses and irregularities of love, contradict or destroy this great truth; that man by

M 3

nature

† Psal. 16. 3.

nature was made to love, and to be happy by loving, and in being loved.

In the last place, let us consider the obligation, that the Christian religion lays us under, to love our neighbours. We have already observed in how effectual a manner our Saviour has recommended it to us, and what an inimitable pattern he has set us ; with what patience he bore the sense of injuries and all resentments. He has taught us to ask forgiveness, only as we forgive others ; he enlarges in repeated expressions on that clause of the short prayer he taught his disciples *, to make the sense of it go the deeper into them. His apostles enforce none of the Christian duties more frequently, and in expressions more sublime and tender, than when they treat of this. *St. Paul* copiously does this, in the 12th and 13th chapter to the *Romans* ; and as it were in a transport, in the 13th chapter of his first epistle to the *Corinthians*. Where after a long discourse on the different gifts and powers, which were more commonly bestowed at that time, and which had so far prevailed on human infirmity, that some were thereby greatly lifted up ; and after he had shewed how unreasonable such an abuse of those gifts was ; he leads them to a more excellent way, and shews them that charity, which is to continue always in the church militant below, as well as in the church triumphant above, is preferable to the gifts of tongues, the healing ; of miracles, and the understanding all mysteries : nay, even to the giving our bodies to be burnt, and all our goods to the poor. Charity is not only preferred to all these, but also to faith and hope, as being the highest state of perfection, to which our souls can possibly be advanced. *St. John* had the peculiar honour to be called *the beloved disciple*, and one reason of his having that cha-

* Mat. 6. 15.

character, seems to be, on account of that melting and tender strain of eloquence, in which he recommends love and charity to others. And it is recorded of him, that when his strength failed, as to other things, and his nature was decayed, he continued still to exhort his disciples, *as little children to love one another.* These are motives so prevalent, that it is impossible for any seriously to reflect on them, but he must feel their power and efficacy.

It will be proper now to examine, what are the acts and instances, in which love ought to exert itself; for we must not love in word, but in deed. And this lies in having an inward concern and tenderness for other persons, and by shewing bowels of compassion towards them. This will appear, when we rejoice at their prosperity, and are touched with the miseries they feel; when we are grieved at the sins they commit, and can mourn for them. Love in the heart, checks every secret repining at happy instances of providence towards others; and will move us to rejoice in their happiness, and to wish that their blessings may be sanctified. In a word, a charitable man will think the best he can of all persons; he will not believe rashly, nor aggravate things severely, but will make reasonable allowances, and admit of just excuses. In this extent of our kindness, tho' some have a right to larger measures of it than others, yet none ought to be entirely excluded from having a part. Wedlock makes two of one, so in that state there ought to be the tenderest union. Children are as part of their parents. Kindred and friends are in the closer ties of neighbourhood. And tho' we are not capable of an universal stretch of love to all, and that we owe a larger share of affection to some, yet we ought to diffuse our love to all, in as comprehensive a manner as we can; and if we cannot shew

mercy to all, yet we ought to love mercy on all occasions, and towards all men.

Another instance of love, which is also secret and known only to God, and our own consciences, is the praying for others, both friends and enemies. We ought to be common intercessors for one another, particularly for those who desire our prayers, or have done us good. We are not bound to think well of those, who we see are bad, nor to believe such are not our enemies, that evidently appear to be so; but we ought to carry a temper disposed to forgive, and to be reconciled to them; to wish them such a measure of good things, as may be a real blessing to them. We ought to pray for a good mind to be in them, that we may live together on better terms. Prayer, as it is the easiest act of charity, being only the hearty wish of a good mind, directed towards God; so it is the perfectest and most valuable act: and therefore by our temper in prayer, as by feeling the pulse, we shall be able to judge, how true and fervent our love to others is.

Another sort of acts, by which we should express our charity, is the doing all good offices, to such as are near us, and within our reach. We ought chiefly to apply this, to the souls of men, and endeavour to make them better and wiser. We should be ready on all occasions to do what good we can, with chearful and affectionate zeal and industry. The modest and humble, the condescending and tender way of shewing favour, does much add to the value of it. In our private conversation we should endeavour to do good to all who are related to us; to our families, children, and servants. We ought to seek out for proper opportunities, and consult the best methods to make the good we do, most effectual and universal.

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It is also necessary that we should be very careful in our behaviour to those, whom we have reason to believe are our enemies. Tho' we cannot help thinking them to be what they really appear, yet we ought to be slow in believing and judging ill of them: and to have ever in our minds a disposition to forgive, as soon as we see just cause. But if we are obliged on account of their offences to demand reparation or punishment in a legal way, we are not bound to make an end, only upon submission. Sometimes we owe the contrary to nature and to law; as in pursuit for bloodshed. However then it ought to appear, that we act by a spirit of justice and duty, and not of revenge. In that case our proceedings should be fair and calm, and things not strained or aggravated. And even when we may be obliged to prosecute a man for his life, we should shew charity and forgiveness in doing then what we can towards saving his soul. There may be instances in which we ought to end lawsuits, and even suffer wrong; in such cases, we are to consider what will tend most to the honour of religion, and the gaining another's soul, and to be thereby determined. Being always ready to entertain propositions for reconciliation, especially if the injury relates to ourselves, and the matter is within our own power.

The last sort of acts by which we may express our charity, are the relieving, assisting, and supporting the poor and afflicted, and doing all we can to make the miseries of others easier to them; by visiting and comforting them in their afflictions; expressing such a just care of, and concern for them, in protecting their persons, or supplying their wants, as may be a real relief to them. The poor are to be considered as the chief objects of this branch of our charity, whom God takes immediately under his own protection; and charges them

upon his bounty to us, as on a rent reserved for their support. This is a debt we pay to God, as well as a charity due to them. In this God considers chiefly our hearts, and accepts *the will for the deed*; when the will is real and sincere, and the deed is not in our power. No general rule can be given of the proportion, that our charities ought to bear to our income; because of the variety of mens necessities and circumstances. In ordinary cases, it is sufficient to give out of *the abundance*, that is, the overplus which can well be spared: but in extraordinary cases, such as persecution, famine, or any other general calamity, we ought to give out of our *poverty or necessity*, straining ourselves, the more liberally to supply others. And our charity should flow from us freely and chearfully, not despising or reproaching those to whom we give. Indeed to admonish them of their faults, in particular such, as may have reduced themselves to a low condition, if done with a good spirit; is a charity to their souls, as well as what we give is a relief to their bodies. There are charities, that even the poor can give. Such as visiting, serving, and watching about the sick, and making their necessities known to such, as will or may relieve them. In a word, what good soever we can do to another, is a part of the debt of love, we owe to all our neighbours. And every man who examines his own capacities, as well as the necessities of others, and exerts himself on the occasion, will soon find what he can do and to whom. Having thus gone over the offices and acts of this love that we owe our neighbours, it is proper in the last place to recommend this temper of mind, to ourselves and others; and this may be the more effectually done, by considering the happiness of those who are so influenced and governed.

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And all such will be like God, inwardly inflamed with a tender and diffusive love, and expressing it as often as any opportunity presents itself. Of all the attributes of God, his love and goodness are the most pleasing to us, and of which we form the clearest apprehensions. What joy then must it be to a good man, to perceive this fairest character of the image of God upon his mind? He knows he is beloved of God, because he is all love, and therefore resembles the author of his being. By this he perceives he grows *perfect, as his heavenly father is perfect*; and which gives him confidence in God. This affection opens his nature, and makes him a fountain of many blessings to others. His sphere may be narrow, his hands and compass short, but he feels a sort of infiniteness in his heart and inclinations; and he would be somewhat like it in his actions, if his fortune was equal to his mind. He is assured, he deceives not himself when he thinks he loves God, because he feels and knows, he loves his neighbour. He is sure religion has a root within him, when it so copiously is displayed to the relief of others. Besides, what a blessing is this temper to mankind, and what honour does it bring to religion? All the world experience the happy influence of it; as it is a sweet temper that seasons friendship, and all conversation; and enables men of plentiful fortunes, largely to distribute, and do good. The roughness of passion, the swellings of pride and vanity, and the base narrowness of interest, never take place, where this prevails. A soft deportment, an air of humility, with a generous freedom of heart, do ever accompany it. And the effects of it, are as many and various, as occasions can give. Such persons are both the *salt of the earth, and the light of the world*; and in them men perceive somewhat so real and noble, as to force them to acknowledge, that all the flights

of wit, in representing an exaltation of friendship, or sublimity of generosity, are but vain airy dreams of an imaginary perfection; in comparison to what such a conformity as this to the divine nature, has, in the mind of a good man, where the motions are as strong, as the effects are real. Instead of the very few, tho' much celebrated instances of men who have died for their friends, or their country; how many heroical instances has this spirit of love produced in men, who have suffered more intolerable miseries, for the sake and good of others, than one would think was possible for the human nature to bear. And such a spirit again revived, would very much raise the honour and influence of our holy religion; which is to express our love towards our neighbour, as well as towards God.

Another consideration that recommends this excellent temper, is the happy effect it has on those who are possessed of it. They have a blessed calm within, and are not disturbed with passion, jealousy, envy, or ill-nature. They observe and rejoice in the happiness of others. They are glad to see them easy, and share with them in their joy and felicity; not fretting or complaining tho' they enjoy not so much as their neighbours: It is true, this sometimes has a very different effect, for the same temper will make many so far consider the misfortunes of others, as to sympathize therewith, and be greatly affected with such objects of compassion as they cannot assist. But there is a real pleasure even in this compassion, as it melts us to the greatest tenderness, and proves us to be men and Christians; and the more we are thus affected, the more certain evidence we have, of our being in a good state.—And this still heightens the inward peace, that a good man feels in the overflowings of his love, by being sure God loves him, because

he loves his neighbour. His soul therefore dwells at ease ; there is a sweetness in all his thoughts and wishes. This makes him clear in his view of things ; no vapours or clouds darken him, but there is an inward serenity in his mind and liveliness in his thoughts, that spreads a chearfulness in his looks, grateful to all about him.

In the last place, this charitable temper maintains in him a constant disposition for prayer. A calm mind is easily recollected, but nothing more dissipates the thoughts, and makes it less fixed and attentive than passion. A charitable man that has had much occasion given to forbear and forgive others, and to return good for evil, dares lay claim to mercy and pardon with much humble assurance ; for tho' he is ready to acknowledge he is many talents indebted to God, yet being of a forgiving temper, he has an argument to plead for mercy and forgiveness, and to conclude that much *will be forgiven him, because he loves much.* There is such a likeness and sympathy between the spirit of love and the spirit of true devotion, that they have a sensible influence upon each other ; as the one rises or abates so will the other.—Thus it appears, how happy this temper is that makes us so like God, and so beneficial to our neighbours. That puts our minds into such a right situation, and keeps us in a continual disposition to offer up prayers to him, who will ever hear them, when proceeding from hearts enflamed with love, and melting in true devotion. To the God of love, be all honour and glory, for evermore.

DISCOURSE XLIII. *Ibbot.*

The way to life is to keep God's commandments.

Mat. 19. 17.

If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

OUR blessed Saviour has very fully described to us the way to eternal happiness in these words; and which are the terms and conditions of our salvation. By the commandments are meant the laws God has given to govern and direct our lives and actions; and which are expressly revealed to us by the prophets, his Son our Saviour, and the apostles. There is indeed a law of nature, to which, had men carefully attended, that would have been sufficient; but they neglecting and defacing this law, it pleased God to make a new discovery of his will, by an express revelation, wherein are revealed those commands, *which, if we would enter life, must be observed by us.*

Tho' our Saviour sent the person who inquired of him what these commands were, to the law of *Moses*, as being a *Jew*; yet if a Christian would be resolved therein, he must have recourse to that revelation, wherein God has in these *last days*, *spoken to us by his Son*; who hath the words of *eternal life*. From his preaching, and the writings of the apostles it is, that Christians must learn what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, by obeying whereof they shall be saved. 'Tis there, and not in the traditions and doctrines of men,
that

that these commandments are to be found, the observance of which will give us an entrance into life. And these are so plainly delivered, that no sincere, honest enquirer can miss finding them: For this enquiry concerning only matter of fact, the solution thereof requires neither logic, metaphysics, or scholastic arts; nor yet subtilty of judgment, nice disputes, nor any other qualification of mind, than due care and honesty. We are only referred to our bible, *what is written in the law? how readest thou**? There alone we have a faithful record of whatever is necessary to salvation. The great duty of sobriety, righteousness, and goodness; the prohibition of all wickedness and unrighteousness, of intemperance and uncleanness, pride and covetousness, fraud and injustice, perjury, lying, and dissimulation; of uncharitableness and hatred, cruelty and oppression; and the strict injunction of sobriety and chastity, humility and contentment, truth and honesty, justice and fidelity, love and charity; I say, all these commands are so plainly laid down in the new testament, that persons of the meanest capacities may know their duty. And such as these our Saviour tells us, are the standing rules of life, which will bring us to heaven. The strict observance and constant performance of these, is universally and indispensably necessary; and it is a vain thing for him who lives in the breach and transgression of them, to think of ever entering into life. We may as well imagine to obtain the end without the means, or to come to a place by going the quite contrary way, as to expect heaven and happiness, when we neglect the commandments of God. For the observance of these is constantly made the express terms and conditions of our admission into heaven.

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* Luke 10. 26.

This condition, in the nature and reason of the thing, is as necessary now under the gospel, as it was under the law of *Moses*, or in a state of nature, when men had nothing but the light of reason and natural conscience to direct them. The pleasing God, and obeying his commandments, ever was and will be the way to recommend ourselves to his favour and acceptance. *This is the will of God, even our sanctification. The commandment is holy, just, and good*; and relates to the conducting our lives and actions in the ways of righteousness. This eternal law of universal right is so agreeable to the purity of God's nature, and the condition of man, as a reasonable creature; that the duties arising from it are of perpetual obligation; nor can any rule, or precept thereto belonging, be taken away or disannulled, without changing the measures of right and wrong, and thereby introducing and authorizing irregularity, confusion, and disorder in the world. And we may be assured, that Christ's coming in the flesh, was not for such an end as this; but, on the contrary, to reform the corrupt state of degenerate men, and out of those who would mend their lives, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, to erect a new kingdom, and to purify unto himself a holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Hence it is that we find such an admirable harmony and agreement in these points, between the gospel of our Saviour, the law of *Moses*, and the dictates of uncorrupted reason. Those virtues, which were always had in great esteem, by the wiser and more sober part of the heathen world, are the very points whereon the greatest stress is laid by *Moses*, and the prophets. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of thee; only, to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* On these

these also the greatest weight is laid by our Saviour in his gospel, and the Apostles in their writings.

The laws given us by our Saviour, and which he requires us to obey, if we will be partakers with him in his kingdom of glory; do chiefly and principally relate to such duties as these, and which, by reason of their importance, he frequently repeats in different places and by various expressions. He began his preaching with a command to repent, bids his disciples to be exemplary in good works; and in his sermon on the mount, he confirms and re-inforces all the moral precepts in the old testament. He tells his hearers, that *except their righteousness, their observing the eternal law of right, shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*; and then says, that he was come to *fulfil the law*, by giving all the commands and precepts of it their full and clear sense, free from the corrupt glosses of the scribes and pharisees. And to shew he in earnest expects obedience to these commands, he tells them, that if *they obey, great shall be their reward; they shall be called the sons of the most high**. And to what he had before said, adds this solemn sanction; *why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* That is, it is in vain for you to receive me as the *Messiah* your king, unless you obey me; for *not every one, that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my father, which is in heaven*. To such as are disobedient, tho' they *have prophesied, and done miracles in my name*, I shall say, at the judgment-day, *depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not*. And when he was told, that his mother and brethren sought to speak with him, stretching out his hands to his disciples, he said, *behold my mother and*
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* Luke 6. 35.

my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father, who is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and mother. By which he means, that they could not be children of the adoption, fellow-heirs with him of eternal life, who did not the will of his heavenly father, by keeping his commandments.

The love of Christ, is certainly necessary to our entrance into happiness, which out of love to us, he purchased for us with his own blood. But this we cannot suppose he will bestow on any, who will not make a suitable return of their love. *If ye love me, says he, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him. If a man loveth me, he will keep my words: He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings †.* This is the tenor of our Saviour's preaching; so that our future happiness or misery depends on our obedience or disobedience to his laws, on the keeping or transgressing his commandment. *The wicked (or disobedient) shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous (or obedient) into life eternal.*

If we proceed in this enquiry, and examine the apostle's answer to this important question, *what shall we do that we may inherit eternal life?* We shall find an answer returned much to the same purpose with our Saviour's. This appears from the apostles frequently pressing repentance on their hearers, in order to their embracing the gospel; for so says St. Peter, *repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins †;* that is, repent of your transgressing God's commands, and keep them better for the future; this is that on which your salvation depends. Again, when Felix sent for Paul, to hear him concerning faith

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† John 14. 15. 23, 24. † Acts 2. 38.

in Christ, the apostle *reasoned of righteousness* (or justice) *and temperance*, (the great duties which we owe to others and ourselves) *and of the judgment to come, till he made Foelix tremble* †. So that temperance and justice, which are plain moral duties, were fundamental parts of the faith and religion St. Paul professed. Thus it is evident, that our Saviour and his apostles required all those who believed him to be the *Messiah*, and received him for their lord and master to live by his laws; and that he will admit no one into the inheritance of eternal life, who has not lived in a sincere obedience to his commandments. The *workers of iniquity*, those who have *done evil* and transgressed the laws of God, shall be judged and condemned to death; but the workers of righteousness, those who have done good, and kept the commandments of God, shall be received into life eternal, when Christ comes at the end of the world, to *render to every one, according to what he hath done in the flesh*. From what has been said, we may learn,

First, The great folly and danger of trusting to external performances, and the instrumental parts of religion, for our salvation. This is an error too prevalent in the world, and which, it is to be feared, many live and die in. Men are apt to think, that the bare belief and outward profession of religion, a constant compliance with the forms and modes of divine worship, and an exact observance of the rites and ceremonies of the church, whereof they are members, especially if zealous therein, will effectually secure their salvation. But tho' these things are good, yet they are only so in order to a further end; and if, by the use of them, we attain not that end, they are insignificant. We therefore never find the promise of eternal life annexed to any of these performances.

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It is constantly made the reward of virtue or good life; such as by *patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality*, are the only persons to whom God will give eternal life. For *tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, shall be on every soul that doth evil*, whether Jew, Gentile, or Christian; whatever sect, persuasion, or denomination he is of. Indeed men will be differently dealt with, according to the several dispensations, different means and opportunities they have had of improvement. But there will be no dispensing with voluntary sins and wickedness: No church or religion, no profession or persuasion whatever, can exempt us from keeping God's commandments. The rule is general and without exception, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*: 'Tis no where said, if thou wilt enter into life, make profession of such particular belief, join in such assemblies, observe such forms and modes of worship; no, but *keep the commandments of God*: Not that men are to be indifferent as to what they believe, because a right belief is most likely to produce a suitable practice. Nor should we be careless in the public worship and service of God, and not mind what sacrifice we offer to him; since such a behaviour, when duly and regularly performed, will have a good influence on our lives and actions; and the duties we carefully discharge in God's house, will tend to regulate our future conduct at other times and places. And if these things have this effect, if we add *to our faith, virtue*, and that our zeal for God's honour and glory, and the purity of his worship, expresseth itself in an uniform obedience to his commands; our religion is then such as it should be, and will not fail of recommending us to God. There is nothing easier than to make an outward profession of religion in words, and to comply with all the externals of it; nothing harder than to sub-
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due the heart, to bring our thoughts and actions to obey the truth. The latter is indispensably necessary to true religion, the former may be practised by those who have no religion at all.

Secondly, Hence therefore we may offer a probable reason, why our Saviour in his answer to this question of the young man's, *what he must do, that he might have eternal life?* repeats the whole second table, and omits the first. Namely, because the *Jews* in his time were, and as he foresaw Christians afterwards would be, more negligent of the second than the first table. They were exact and scrupulous in the outward performance of their duty to God, but very little regarded their duty to men. They openly professed to observe the first commandment, of *having but one God*; they were strict observers of the second, and had idols in great abhorrence; they were very cautious of the letter of the third command, and would not apply the name of God to a falsehood, tho' they swore by other things which had such a relation to God, as amounted to swearing by his name. And as to the sabbath, they kept it more strictly than God himself ever intended, insomuch that they accused our Saviour of breaking the sabbath, because on that day he wrought several miracles of love and mercy. Thus far these hypocrites went, and so may others with as little religion as they had. The great difficulty lies in keeping the commands of the second table, because they thwart our corrupt passions and affections, and oppose us in our worldly designs and sensual satisfactions. In this the *Jews* were exceedingly defective: They made void the fifth commandment by their own traditions: They were full of rancour, spite, and bloody malice, as appears by their carriage towards our Saviour, from whence we may observe how little they valued the sixth com-

commandment, or the ninth, when they set up false witnesses against our blessed Lord.

Nay, they kept the first table, that they might the better break the second; and made their devotions and worship of God instruments of fraud and oppression. They made long prayers, were very exact in all those religious duties, which had most of noise and shew, that, by an appearance of great sanctity, they might get a fairer opportunity of compassing their bye ends, selfish and worldly designs; and therefore our Saviour wisely ordered his discourses according to the temper of that people, and the state of those times wherein he lived. And if there are among Christians any of this temper, who would willingly and gladly observe the commands of the first table, if they might be dispensed with in those of the second; who would be well content to give God his due, if they might deal as they pleased with their neighbour; who would be constant in attending the public worship and outward ordinances of religion, if they might live at pleasure in private, and indulge themselves in secret sins: All such persons should therefore be reminded of the duties of the second table, as being absolutely necessary to be performed by those who would enter into life.

It ought to be observed, that moral duties make a great part of true religion. Our Saviour here gives us the sum and substance of what God requires at our hands, and the duties we owe to our neighbour, all which are certainly of a moral nature. Piety towards God is here supposed, tho' not expressly mentioned; and no doubt we serve God as much and as faithfully, when we are honest and just in our dealings, kind and compassionate, helpful and beneficial to others, as by our immediate worship of him. In all those places where we have a short and summary account of the

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Disc. XLIII. *to keep God's commandments.* 263

the whole body of religion, these duties are never omitted, but always absolutely insisted on. They are principal ingredients of religion, and tho' slighted and neglected by some men, as very low attainments and beggarly things, in comparison of some pretended spiritualities; yet we see the scripture makes no small account of them, nor can any man be truly religious without them. They are the conditions of entering into life, the chief ingredients of that holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord.* I come now to apply what has been offered*. And,

It was the glory of primitive christianity, that a clear and uniform virtue shone bright in the lives of its disciples, and distinguished them from the rest of mankind. It was a strict observance of every precept of their religion, an exemplary conquest over passion and appetite, a resolute zeal for the honour, and an unwearied devotion in the service of God, that recommended the gospel to the world. Men saw their works, and glorified their father which was in heaven. But alas! with what shame and regret must we observe the reverse of this character, in the present lives and morality of Christians. When we see piety and holiness ridiculed as morose singularities, and those vices not only owned but gloried in, at the mention of which Christians ought to tremble; when even the best of us appear contented with an imperfect virtue, and the greatest part of our examples are so abandoned to vice, that, instead of offending in one point, there is scarce the appearance of obeying in any one.

Let us then, by a bright and uniform example of piety revive the declining spirit of religion, and retrieve the ancient honour of christianity. Let us not amuse ourselves with vain projects of reconciling sin and duty, but be contented to tread the

old, tho' strait and narrow paths, of faith and obedience ; the paths in which prophets, apostles and martyrs are gone before us ; and let us not fondly imagine, that the way to happiness is made plainer to us than it was to them. Let us remember, that our religion has taught us, that there is no communion of light with darkness ; that we cannot serve two interests so perfectly irreconcilable as God and mammon. Let us then give a general discharge to all our lusts and irregular desires ; and let none be so secret as to be concealed, or so beloved as to be spared. Let no sin appear small or inconsiderable, by which an almighty God is offended, and our eternal salvation endangered : And if our obedience be like the young man's in the gospel, so near to perfection, that but one thing is wanting ; let us not suffer a single vice to rob us of eternal happiness, and make it in vain for us, that a Jesus, a Saviour is come into the world. Let us not delude ourselves with vain hopes, that God will reverse one of his laws, or depart from the established rules of his justice in our favour. He hath said, *this do and thou shalt live* ; and shall man dispute the conditions ? Shall dust and ashes prescribe the terms on which it will be saved ?

Lastly, let no pretence of difficulty weaken our resolutions in the pursuit of our duty, since God has not only allotted the burden to our abilities, with all the compassion of a merciful father ; but has also assured us of the support of his Holy Spirit, who will supply vigour to the weary, and strength to the weak, and make us more than conquerors. Let us not therefore faint, or be weary in our journey, much less turn back and sit down in despair, but cheerfully press toward the high mark of our calling ; and as far as our own ability, and the divine assistance will carry us, endeavour to be pure as our creator is pure, and perfect as our father in heaven is perfect.

DISCOURSE XLIV. *Clarke.*

Of the grace of God, and the power of man,
in the work of salvation.

Philippians 2. 12, 13.

*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ;
for it is God which worketh in you, both to will,
and to do, of his good pleasure.*

THERE is no question in divinity hath raised greater contention and disputes, than what concerns the extent of the grace of God, and the power of man. *Some*, in order to vindicate God from being the author of sin, have so far maintained the perfect freedom of mens faculties, and their liberty of chusing good or evil, that they have been thought to diminish from the efficacy of God's grace. *Others*, on the contrary, ascribing too much to the efficacy of the divine grace, have supposed men to have no natural powers, of acting, or willing ; no use of the original faculties, given them at their creation ; no liberty of will or freedom of choice, in matters of morality and religion ; by which doctrine they have consequently introduced an absolute necessity or fatality upon mens actions ; from whence it unavoidably follows, that God, and not man, is the author of sin.

Another question not unlike this, has happened, concerning the liberty of the will of man, and the prescience, or foreknowledge of God. *Some*, considering that without liberty of the will, there can be no religion, no virtue, or vice, no just punish-

ment, or reasonable reward, have denied God's foreknowledge of future and free events. *Others*, on the contrary, intent upon magnifying the glory of the divine attributes, and the including all future events within the compass of God's foreknowledge, have affirmed, that all the actions of men are absolutely determined, by a chain of certain and unalterable causes. The natural consequence of which is, that man in reality is no more capable of morality or religion, than a machine, or a beast that perishes.

The truth in both these controversies is, that something in each part of the question is true; and which ought to be so understood, as not to establish one truth, at the expence of another. For instance; the freedom of mens will, whatever that be, must not be inconsistent with any of God's perfections; because the attributes of the divine nature, are unalterably necessary in themselves, antecedent to the production of all created beings. On the other side, no attribute of the divine nature, in particular his foreknowledge, can possibly be such, as to take away the liberty of the will of man; because this would destroy some other perfections of God equally necessary; I mean his justice and goodness. Since then, neither the foreknowledge of God, nor the liberty of man, can, without a contradiction be denied, it unavoidably follows, that God's foreknowledge must be such as not to be inconsistent with the liberty of man. For as a man who has no influence over other persons actions, can yet often perceive beforehand, what another, whose disposition he is well acquainted with, will in certain circumstances do; so it is very reasonable to apprehend, that God, without influencing mens wills by his power, may have a much more certain knowledge of future free events, as the perfection of his nature is greater than any man's.

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But whatever power men may have in the use of their natural faculties, yet the sense of this, must not diminish our continual dependance upon God ; because these powers and faculties are not of our own procuring, but are the gift of God. And therefore whatever the power and efficacy of God's grace may be, yet it cannot be such, as to over-rule the liberty of mens will and choice, and render their actions necessary ; because this would destroy the morality of men's actions, and the very nature of virtue and vice. Since then, the influence of divine grace, and the power of men, in the use of their faculties, are not to be denied ; therefore by the grace of God, must only be understood, a moral assistance ; and this is what perfectly agrees with the free use of mens faculties. *We must work out our salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* We cannot do this without the grace of God ; but if we will use our own endeavours, he will give us power to do it. Moral agents must be influenced only by moral motives ; by reason and argument, by persuasion and conviction, by hopes and fears : and the efficacy of God's grace can only consist in laying before men proper arguments for conviction, and sufficient helps and assistances to act according thereto. But any influence that amounts to force, not to be resisted, would be so far from making men good and virtuous, that it would tend to destroy all virtue and goodness in them.

The sum of all is this : in order to give God his due honour and glory, and to preserve in men, a just sense of their dependance upon him, we ought to acknowledge, that all our powers and natural faculties are entirely derived from God's free goodness, and continued to us by his good pleasure ; and that neither of these is in any wise owing

to ourselves: and much more is every supernatural sufficiency, and extraordinary assistance, every revealed means of knowledge and motive to virtue, every direction or guidance in the way to life, which we receive from the kind influence of the divine spirit, wholly owing to the free gift or grace of God. And the promise of eternal happiness, as the reward of our best endeavours, is also God's free bounty and undeserved gift to unprofitable servants. All these must be acknowledged by us, to proceed from God; that due honour and just glory, may be given to him. But then, that the nature of virtue and vice may not be taken away, it is also necessary to acknowledge, that as the natural faculties, with which God hath endowed men, are in their power to use or neglect them; so the supernatural assistances afforded men by the gospel, and by the influence of divine grace, are still only assistances, that may be complied with, or rejected: and eternal life, as it is the free gift of God, which men could not claim, by virtue of any work or duty they could perform; so it is not a gift, forced or imposed upon them, but such a free gift, as requires the concurrence of their own endeavours, in making use of the divine assistance to obtain it. For this reason, we are exhorted to *grow in grace*, as a duty depending on our own endeavours; and not to *quench* or *grieve* the holy spirit of God, who will not forcibly strive with those, who resist his good motions. And thus some are blamed, for *receiving the grace of God*, in vain; for resisting the Holy Ghost, and rejecting *the counsel of God, against themselves*.

The cause of many erroneous opinions and controversies is generally this; that men attending to one point only, in opposing some particular error, have been apt to be carried beyond the truth of the argument, and so by exposing one error, have fell
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into some other of a contrary extream. Thus in disputing against the church of *Rome*, some have incautiously used such arguments, as might at the same time, be alledged by others, with the same force against themselves. On the contrary, others, in the heat of controversy with some of their brethren, have drawn such arguments from church authority, and general councils; as may on another occasion be turned against themselves by the church of *Rome*, with at least equal force. And thus, in the present case; some, solicitous to maintain the liberty of man's will, may have asserted such a power in mens use of their natural faculties, as to make them not dependent upon God; and others, may think to claim, as of right, the reward of heaven, and not as of free grace: but such as these, going to establish their *own righteousness*, and not submitting to the righteousness of God, do indeed frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness comes by this way, then Christ is *dead in vain*. On the contrary, others, solicitous to magnify God's absolute sovereignty, and the efficacy of divine grace, and to humble the vanity of those, who assume any thing as of themselves, have generally urged such arguments against their adversaries, as that the asserters of necessity and fate, who are enemies to all religion, may equally allege the same against themselves. And by exalting God's grace into an irresistible efficacy, they have in truth made it of no efficacy at all. For in matters of morality and religion, men are only morally better, when by moral motives, by conviction of truth and reason, by well grounded hopes, and just fears, they are prevailed upon to love, and chuse freely what is right and good. But to be compelled to do even the best action that is, can have no goodness in it. The truth is, if we will frame right notions of religion, such as truly tend to promote the glory of

God, and virtue and obedience in men; we must, on the one side, not ascribe to men such power, as that they can merit any thing of themselves; nor on the other side, we must not imagine the power or grace of God, will so influence men, as to render their own endeavours vain and needles. But the grace of God, manifested in the gospel, by the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit, will effectually enable men to perform their duty; and the power and will of man, making use of that assistance to improve in virtue, will produce those fruits of the spirit, which wicked men are condemned for not bringing forth; because tho' the means of grace were offered and proposed to them, yet they wilfully refused to be amended thereby. God of his free grace, hath given them power to will and to do; but yet thro' their own obstinate disobedience, they will not work out their own salvation.

When therefore the scripture says, *by grace we are saved*, and yet that *we work out our own salvation*, these phrases are different representations of one and the same thing. We are saved by grace, because without God's gracious assistance and acceptance of our endeavours, we of ourselves could not obtain salvation; and yet it is also true, that we work out our own salvation, because without a life of virtue and obedience, and a diligent use of those means which the grace of God affords, his grace alone will not force us to be saved. Thus God's working in or with us, and our working together with him, are used in scripture, as causes concurring and producing the same effect. And wicked men being hardened of God, or hardening themselves, in like manner, signify the same thing under different respects. They harden themselves, by their becoming obdurate, thro' obstinacy and perverseness: they are hardened of God, not by any act of his; but as the scripture says, *by letting them follow their*
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own imaginations, and giving them over to a reprobate mind, to work all unrighteousness with greediness.

I shall now proceed to consider more distinctly, what is meant by working out our salvation, with fear and trembling; and why we are to do it in that manner? also what is meant by God's working in us to will and to do, of his good pleasure? and how this is a motive to us, for endeavouring after it?

Salvation in general signifies deliverance from any imminent danger. Hence in scripture it is applied by way of eminence to signify the final deliverance of virtuous and good men, from that general destruction, which will at last overwhelm a wicked and incorrigible world. For the bulk of mankind, being, in the nature of things, thro' their own wickedness, incapable of inheriting the kingdom of heaven, must, in point of wisdom, and good government, but not by any cruel decree of God, be excluded heaven; and by the righteous and unerring judge, be sent according to their respective demerits into destruction; and from which misery, only such shall be saved, as are worthy to obtain eternal life. The deliverance therefore of all just and good men, by the mercy of God in Christ, from that final destruction, which must of necessity fall on a wicked, corrupt world, is what the scripture calls salvation: and in consequence whereof, only those shall be admitted into that incorruptible inheritance, which is the free gift of God thro' Christ, whom he shall think fit to make joint-heirs with him, in his eternal kingdom of glory. So that the duty of working out this salvation, which we are exhorted to in the text, signifies the making use of those means, which are proper to obtain this end; that is, to be delivered by a life of virtue and true religion, from the power and tyranny of the devil,

devil, from the dominion of sin, and the punishment of eternal death.

Men, in the state of heathen wickedness, being habitually subject to a spirit of delusion, impiety and debauchery, are in scripture represented as slaves to Satan, the *prince of this world*, who *worketh in the children of disobedience*. From this tyranny of the devil, men are saved, by forsaking this idolatry, and returning to the worship of the true God, as taught in the gospel of Christ, being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear son *. And those also who having embraced the gospel, do by any habit of sin, live unworthy of their holy profession, are in scripture said to be servants and slaves to sin, and in the snare of the devil. So that whoever lives in sin, tho' he professes himself a disciple of Christ, is in reality the servant of Satan. *He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning* †. The design of Christ's coming into the world was, *to destroy the works of the devil*; to save men *from their sins* ‡; to persuade, and enable them to save themselves amongst a wicked and corrupt generation; to deliver them *from the bondage of corruption*, into the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*. Working out our own salvation therefore, considered as an exhortation to those who are christians, signifies making a diligent use of the means and encouragements afforded in the gospel, to enable us to reform every evil habit, and to improve in the practice of every virtue, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And this salvation shall not be only from the punishment of sin, but moreover eternal life and happiness shall, by God's free gift, be conferred upon all them, who shall *be thought worthy to stand before the son of man*. To work out our own

* Col. 1. 13.

† 1 John 3. 8.

‡ Mat. 1. 21.

own salvation then, is of the same import with these words of St. Peter ; *Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall ; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* *. If we compare this with the text, it undeniably follows, that men, by God's assistance, have a power, as well as an obligation, to work out their salvation ; and that their election, or their being approved of God, depends on that diligence and sincere endeavour of their own, which they are exhorted to make use of, that they may thereby secure their being elected of God. As to the words *fear and trembling*, they do not here mean any passion, but only due care and diligence in our actions, in opposition to presumption or negligence ; as be not *high minded but fear* ; and let him that *standeth, take heed lest he fall*. Thus, *happy is the man that feareth*, or is cautious ; but he that *hardeneth his heart*, or is careless and negligent, shall *fall into mischief* †.

The reasons why we are exhorted to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, with caution, diligence and application, are, 1st, because it is of the greatest importance to us : it is the one thing necessary, for the preservation of ourselves, of our souls, and future eternal happiness. If a man will give all that he has, for the preservation of this short transitory life, what will he not give in exchange for his soul, and for a portion in eternity ? How does it behove therefore every reasonable man, to be well assured in his own mind, which is the way of salvation ; and that he be diligent to walk therein ?—Another reason why we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling is, because of the difficulties attending this work ; not in the na-

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* 2 Pet. 1. 10.

† Prov. 27. 14.

ture of the thing, for *Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light*; and virtue of all things is the most natural and reasonable; nor are the commandments of God any way grievous. But great difficulties often arise by means of wicked men, and the corrupt inclination of our ungoverned appetites. So that even the righteous *are scarcely saved*; or so as by *fire*, that is with great difficulty. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, warring against the reason and law of our minds; so that we cannot easily do what is most reasonable. And if we can conquer ourselves, yet by the difficulties we meet with, from the prophane persecutor, or the superstitious bigot; from the blenders of human authority with divine; from those who confound the powers of this world, with the doctrines of men, and the commands of God: by means of these, the gate is made strait, and the way narrow; so that we cannot without tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, we are directed to work out our salvation with fear, because it is a work, that can be done but once; which if neglected, we are lost for ever. *It is appointed for men once to die, and after that the judgment.* And if the door be shut, there is no admission. And as we are continually in danger of new temptations, we ought perpetually to be upon our guard. We are admonished to *watch*, and to be *ready always*; to *stand fast in the faith*, to *acquit ourselves like men*; to be *sober and vigilant*; and to *take heed, lest there be in any of us, an evil heart of unbelief.* For only to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality, is made the promise of eternal life.

I proceed to consider, what is meant by God's working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure: and the meaning is, that God is the author of all those powers and faculties we have,

which some call natural. *For in him we live, we move, and have our being.* He has endued us with reason and understanding, with the faculty of discerning between good and evil, with the power of willing and chusing what is right. And yet we are not of ourselves sufficient to think any thing, but our sufficiency is of God *. Weak therefore is that distinction of some divines, between nature and grace; as if both were not equally the gift of God. And by God's giving us both to will and to do, signifies also his affording us supernatural helps, such as the gospel, which is frequently called, *the grace of God, that bringeth salvation*, and hath *appeared to all men*. And this general grace of God, includes the following supernatural helps. A more clear and distinct knowledge of our duty, than could be discovered by the light of nature. A more plain and express *bringing of life and immortality to light*, by the particular revelation of a judgment to come. Exceeding great and precious promises, by the expectation of which, we are enabled to overcome the world, to quench all the fiery darts of the devil, and to become perfect in righteousness and true holiness. An assurance of the forgiveness of past sins upon repentance, which the scripture calls grace. The assistance of the divine spirit, in the constant practice of our duty; by which we are renewed, justified, sanctified, and have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. Not that the spirit of God acts by compulsion, forcibly and irresistibly, the contrary of which evidently appears, from our being exhorted not to quench, grieve and drive him from us; but he helps our infirmities, in the way of moral assistance, persuasion, direction and concurrence; but then he will not always strive with those who obstinately resist his motions. And under extraordinary trials, the gospel promises more

* 2 Cor. 3, 5.

particular support; God will *never leave nor forsake us*, but *will with the temptation make a way to escape*, that *we may be able to bear it*. These supernatural helps and assistances are afforded us by the gospel.

The last words in the text, *of his good pleasure*, do not signify, that God works these things arbitrarily; but the meaning is, that he does them thro' his goodness. It is God's goodness, which moves him to work in us to will and to do; he gives us both the faculties of nature, and the supernatural assistances of the gospel, to lead us unto life and happiness.

The last thing proposed is, to shew, how God's working in us to will and to do, is an argument or motive for us, to work out our own salvation. The meaning is, not that God doth all for us; but as God of his goodness gives us power, therefore we may and ought to act; and if we are sincere in the use of the powers given us, our endeavours shall not be in vain. For, *greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world; and if God be for us, who can be against us?*

From what has been said, we may observe, the little foundation there is in scripture, for any such notion, as that wicked men have no power to do any thing towards their own conversion, but their impenitency proceeds from God's not giving them grace to repent; which is a great abuse of a scripture expression. For God's giving or granting men repentance, signifies in scripture, his accepting of their repentance, for the forgiveness of past sins, instead of innocence; and not his conferring repentance upon them as a gift, which is altogether unintelligible.—And from the explication given of the text, we should learn to be diligent in working out our salvation, by the use of those means, which God has worked or implanted in us. I shall conclude

Dife. XLIV. *in the work of salvation.* 277

clude all in the words of the book of wisdom.
' Seek not death in the error of your life ; and
' pull not upon yourselves destruction with the
' works of your own hands. For God made not
' death, neither has he pleasure in the destruction
' of the wicked ; but ungodly men, with their
' words and works called it unto them *.—Say not
' thou, the Lord has caused me to err ; for he hath
' no need of the sinful man. The Lord hateth all
' abomination ; and they that fear God, love it
' not. He himself made men from the beginning,
' and left them in the hands of his counsel ; if thou
' wilt, to keep the commandments, and to per-
' form acceptable faithfulness. He hath set fire and
' water before thee ; stretch forth thy hand unto
' whether thou wilt. Before man is life and death,
' and whether him liketh shall be given. For the
' wisdom of the Lord is great ; and he is mighty
' in power, and beholdeth all things. And his
' eyes are upon them that fear him ; and he
' knoweth every work of man. He hath com-
' manded no man to do wickedly, neither has he
' given any man licence to sin † ?

* Wisd. 1. 12.

† Ecclus. 15. 11.

DISCOURSE XLV. Abp. Tillotson.

The reasonableness and advantage of a religious life.

Mat. 6. 33.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

BY the *Kingdom of God and his righteousness* is here meant, the whole business of religion; our last end, which is eternal life and happiness: The way and means to this end, which is righteousness, or universal goodness. By *seeking first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, is meant, the greatest intention of mind, and earnestness of endeavours so to mind the concerns of religion, as thereby to attain eternal happiness; to be as serious and intent therein, as earthly minded men are after the things of this world. This in general; but a sincere and earnest *seeking after the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, doth also imply these several particulars. It implies a fixed design and resolution to obtain the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls, as being our chief end; to have it always in view, to be firmly resolved to do our utmost to attain it. Not that we are obliged continually to think of it, but to have it frequently in our minds, habitually to intend and design it, so as to make it the scope of all our endeavours and actions, and all other things subservient thereto. Like a traveller, who tho' he is not always thinking of every step he takes, nor continually in motion, but bates
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and lodges by the way, yet all he does is subservient to, and in prosecution of his journey. And thus while we sojourn in this world, our fixed aim and design should be to get to heaven, all our desires and endeavours should tend that way. And if our minds are once resolved, that will determine and govern all our motions, and inspire us with diligence and zeal to prosecute our end. Again,

It implies incessant care and diligence as to the means; that we make religion our business, practise the duties of it, both in publick and private, with the same seriousness and application of mind as men use to procure wealth and honour; especially on the *Lord's day*, which God hath set apart for the duties of his worship and service. Not that we are excused from minding religion at other times, for God expects that we should always live in an habitual sense of him, *to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long* †; and to improve all opportunities for the exercise of piety and devotion. But this day he peremptorily challengeth to himself, and requires us to employ it in his service, and dedicate it to religion; to the contemplation of God and heavenly things, and the care of our immortal souls, with the same seriousness and diligence, as we *other days labour for the bread that perisheth*. And the less leisure we have on *other days*, for the duties of religion, the more intirely should we devote and consecrate *this day*, to those purposes. Our whole life should be under the government, and directed by the laws of religion; it should be our continual care and endeavour to please God in all things, to take as much or more pains to be good men, as any can do to be rich and great in this world; it being a more noble design to improve in grace and virtue, than to prosper in our temporal estate.

estate. And we do not *seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness* in good earnest, unless we studiously endeavour to subdue our lusts, govern our passions, and reform whatever is amiss in our lives and conversation. Indeed, it requires great diligence, care and attention, to be truly good ; to be meek and humble, patient, contented, and resigned to the will of God in every condition ; to be peaceable, charitable, willing and ready to forgive ; these are difficult things, and whatever we may think, it is not a wish, a sudden resolution before receiving the Sacrament, nor even frequent, fervent prayers, without the hearty concurrence of our own care and endeavours, that will render our lives such, as we pray God by his grace, to enable us to be.

Lastly, It implies patience and perseverance in our endeavours, *to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness* ; we must never cease pursuing them till we have obtained them, and this notwithstanding all the difficulties and discouragements we meet with, for that must be expected ; our Lord tells us, *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life*, and we must expect to pass thro' many tribulations, before we shall enter into *the kingdom of God*. We should therefore be armed with much patience, and firm resolutions, that we may be enabled to bear up, and hold out, against all the difficulties we are to encounter. Since only *he that endureth to the end shall be saved*. And if we hope to receive the crown of life, *we must be faithful to the death**. Thus much as to *seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*.

I shall now explain what is more particularly meant, by *seeking these first* ; *seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness* : our Saviour's meaning is, that religion, the concern of our souls, and eternal happiness, should be our first and principal care ;

* Mat. 10. 22. Rev. 2. 10.

care ; that all other things should be made subservient to this great design, and be no further minded by us, than as they tend to promote it. If Heaven be our utmost aim, and that we study and endeavour to be righteous and holy, in order to obtain it ; such resolutions sincerely entertained, will over-rule all other considerations, and make the things of this world give way to what is our chief end, the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls. Having thus explained the meaning of the words, the next thing shall be to give some plain rules for our direction, how to *seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.* And,

Let us always live under a powerful sense of another world ; and remember we are placed here only for a little while, and *that* wholly to prepare for a better and more happy life. Let this thought be often in our minds ; that eternity is the most considerable duration, and the next world the place of our everlasting abode ; that the present state is of small moment and consideration, and only in order to our future, eternal condition. We may please ourselves here for a little time, with trifles and shadows of pleasure and happiness ; we may be exercised with troubles and afflictions for a short space, for a *moment*, if compared with eternity ; but substantial, durable happiness, or misery, remains for men in the other world, and will certainly be their portion, according to their behaviour in this life. And the serious consideration of this should put us on vigorous preparations for another world, make us wholly intent on our eternal state, and to resolve, whatever becomes of us here, to take effectual care, that we are happy for ever. He who firmly believes the soul's immortality, and a life after death that will never end, will be very solicitous, and bend all his care and thoughts, how to avoid

avoid everlasting misery, and secure to himself, immortal bliss and happiness. Let us then be fully convinced, of the absolute, indispensable necessity of holiness and righteousness, as the only means to attain the kingdom of God ; that holiness and happiness are inseparable, the one being a necessary condition and qualification for the other ; that it is a vain thing to hope for admittance into the kingdom of God, without endeavouring after his righteousness, there being a strong connexion between them ; for a man may as reasonably expect to be well and at ease without health, as happy without holiness. This is what renders us like God, and can alone make us capable of enjoying him for ever, since *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. Let us also remember, that *righteousness* is of great extent ; it comprehends all goodness, all the duties and practice of religion ; it is a complication of all the graces, virtues, duties and offices of a good man. To denominate a man righteous, all parts of religion and goodness must concur ; knowledge and practice, faith and good works, right opinions and real virtues, an orthodox profession and a holy life, purity of heart and unspotted manners, godliness and honesty, the bridling our tongue and the governing our passions ; and above all things, charity, the bond of perfection. *Righteousness* is our conformity to the law of God, which if it be real and sincere, will be uniform and universal, equally respecting all God's commands, and every known duty ; not observing one or two precepts, and neglecting the rest ; keeping the duties of the one table, and omitting the other : but we must be *holy in all manner of conversation*, in the tenor of our actions, and the whole course of our lives ; since any one reigning sin and vice, any gross notorious defect in the virtues of a good life, will spoil our righteousness, and exclude us the kingdom of heaven.

Again,

Again, let us wisely estimate every part and duty of religion, according to its true nature and importance. Knowledge and faith without a good life, signify nothing. The means of religion, as prayer, fasting, reading and hearing God's word, and devoutly receiving the blessed sacrament, are of less value, than what is the end of all these, to be *fruitful in all the works of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.* So likewise the circumstances of religion, are less considerable than the substantial means and instruments of it. And therefore all rites and ceremonies are of less estimation, and subordinate to the substance of God's worship. For the same reason, the moral duties of religion, comprehended under the two great commandments, *the love of God and our neighbour*, are to be preferred to matters of mere positive institution, because they are eternal and of indispensable obligation; and where both cannot be performed, what is positive ought to give place to what is moral and good in its own nature. The law of the *sabbath* ought to give place to *works of mercy*; peace and charity are more valuable, than doubtful disputes and controversy. These things carefully considered, are of great moment to make men sincerely and wisely religious. For men may make a great stir about some parts of religion, be very careful and diligent, zealous and earnest about the means of religion, in the exercises of piety and devotion, yet be destitute of the power and life of it, and fall short of that inward, real and substantial *righteousness*, which alone can qualify us for *the kingdom of God.*

The last direction I would give, is to have a particular regard to the great duty of charity, or almsgiving, this being an eminent part of religion, a great evidence of the truth and certainty of our piety; for by giving alms we shall *provide for ourselves*

selves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, and lay up for ourselves a good foundation. Therefore this part of religion ought in a more especial manner to be regarded by us, because on the performance or neglect of this duty, our eternal happiness so much depends.

I shall now represent to you some proper arguments, and powerful encouragements, whereby to engage us to mind, and carefully regard, this our great interest and concern. The worth and excellency of the things we are to seek, namely, *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, which are the greatest and best things we can desire, are very considerable motives to excite our endeavours. The *kingdom of God* imports the eternal salvation of our souls, and their being everlastingly happy in another world. The soul of man is of so excellent a nature, of so immortal a duration, and so infinitely valuable, as ought to be much dearer to us, than any of the perishing objects of this world. Other things neither constitute our being, nor are essential to our happiness; but our souls are ourselves, and their loss is our ruin and destruction. So that nothing is to be regarded by us, with so much care and concern, as the salvation of our immortal souls; and how to rescue them from everlasting misery, and make us eternally happy. And can we be at too much pains to escape so dismal a condition, so dreadful a ruin, as that of body and soul to all eternity? can any man be concerned enough to bring about so great a good for himself? or purchase too dear, a blessing so desirable, and so durable as being happy for ever? Of such value then is *the kingdom of God*; and next to it is *righteousness*, which is the only way and means whereby this kingdom is to be attained, and therefore to be sought by us with the greatest earnestness. So that the things I am pressing you to seek after, are most

most effectually recommended, by reminding you of what they are. The *kingdom* of God is eternal life and happiness, and his *righteousness* is universal holiness and goodness, without which no man is qualified for this blessed state.

Another powerful argument to our care and diligence herein, is, the fatal danger of miscarrying, in a matter of so great concern. We may do many things in religion, and take some pains to get to heaven, and yet fall short of it. The rich young man in the gospel, was not *far* from the *kingdom* of God, he failed only in one point, he was too much addicted to the world, unwilling to part with his great possessions, and distribute them in charity to the poor, and therefore lost our Saviour. If the world govern and bear sway in our hearts, *if we mind earthly things*, and make these our principal care and design, the kingdom of God and his *righteousness* shall not be *added* unto us; these latter we must not expect, unless we mind them in the first place. And who would not place his industry and endeavour upon a design in which he is sure not to miscarry, if he do but heartily and in good earnest pursue it? If a man may be certainly happy for ever, upon the same or easier terms than he can accomplish any thing in this world; who would not seek that which is most worthy the having, and most sure to be obtained?

And the encouragement given us in the text, is itself very considerable, *all these things shall be added unto us*; that is, all temporal good things, if we *first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness*. This certainly is a very tempting consideration; for who would not be glad to reconcile the enjoyments of this world with the hopes of heaven and eternal happiness? But men do not generally like our Saviour's method, they would seek the things of this world in the first place, and get to heaven

at last. And yet our Saviour has gone as far as in reason can be desired; he hath promised, that if we make religion, and the salvation of our souls, our first and great care, that *all these things shall be added unto us*. So that the design of going to heaven, and being happy for ever, is no ways inconsistent with a competent portion of the things of this life. *Godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come*. The business of religion, the practice of a holy and virtuous life, is no hinderance to a man's prospering in his temporal estate; nay, in many respects it tends to promote and advance it: by engaging us to diligence in our calling, whereby to procure the blessing of God on our honest and lawful endeavours; by obliging us to the strict and constant practice of truth, justice and fidelity, in all our dealings and commerce; which is the best way to establish a clear and solid reputation and good esteem among men. An unspeakable advantage *this* in business, one of the best and most lasting instruments of prosperity and success.

Besides, religion frees a man from those passions and vices, which naturally tend to ruin mens estates; as intemperance and lewdness; which are chargeable vices, and not only take men off from business, but waste their estates, and bring many inconveniencies on themselves and family. Religion makes men meek, peaceable and inoffensive, in word and deed, which is a great security against law-suits and contentions, injuries and affronts from others. They who provoke and offend none, may expect not to be disturbed by others in their possessions and enjoyments; *who will harm you, if you are followers of that which is good?* Most men, if not all, have a kindness and veneration for true goodness. Thus religion naturally tends to the temporal prosperity of men, to the promoting their welfare and happiness

happinefs even in this world; the providence of God is alfo concerned for good men, and a fpecial bleffing attends them in all their undertakings. So that we fee how reasonable it is, to make religion and the concerns of another life, our great care and bufinefs: And yet, alas! how are thefe things neglected by the greateft part of mankind! Even the beft of us mind it not as we ought. Indeed, there are two or three things which men commonly urge, if not to juftify, yet to mitigate and excufe this great neglect. *First*, they pretend great difficulties and difcouragements in the ways of religion. This muft be acknowledged to be true, fo far as to awaken our care and excite our induftry; but by no means to make us defpond, and refolve to neglect fo great a concern, becaufe attended with fome difficulties. Men who have no mind to a thing, are apt to fay, *there is a lion in the way*; that is, they fancy to themfelves dangers and terrors that are not. Thus men who have no mind to take pains to get to heaven, are apt to complain of the infuperable difficulties of religion; how hard it is for a man to mortify his lufts, fubdue his appetites, govern his paffions, and perform what is neceffary to bring him to heaven? Now admitting all thefe things true; but is it not alfo difficult to get an eftate, and to rife high in this world? Is religion difficult; and what is not fo, that is of any eftimation? Is not the law a difficult and crabbed ftudy? Does it not require great labour and perpetual application to excel in any kind of knowledge, to be mafter of any art or profefſion? In a word, what is there valuable in the world, that can be got without pains? And is eternal life and glory fo inconfiderable a thing, as not to be worth our care and induftry? Should fo great a good be expofed to the faint and idle wifhes, the cheap and lazy endeavours of flothful men? With what
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conscience can we bid less for heaven and eternal life, than for the things of this world; things of no value in comparison, things which *perish in the using*, and when we have them, may be taken from us by a thousand accidents? A fever may deprive us of our understanding, confound all our knowledge, and turn us into fools and idiots. An inundation, or a fire, may sweep away and devour our estates. A succession of calamities, may, in a few hours, make the greatest and richest man as poor as *Job*.

But let the difficulty of attaining the *kingdom of God and his righteousness* be as great as possible, still it is absolutely necessary for us to seek after it, since otherwise we are miserable and undone for ever. And therefore not to dissemble in the matter, the difficulties of religion are considerable; but then they are much greater at first; they will every day abate and grow less, and by degrees become easy and pleasant. A pleasure so great, as none knows, but he that hath it, nor would such exchange it, for all the sensual enjoyments of this world.

There are others who pretend want of time, to mind so great a work; 'tis very true that all have not equal leisure for this purpose, some are much more taken up than others, with the necessary cares of this life: But God forces no man to neglect his body and his health, his family and estate, to save his soul. There is a considerable part of religion which does not require time, but only resolution and care; not to commit sin, not to break the laws of God, not to be intemperate, to make no provision for the *flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*, does not spend time, but saves it for better purposes: So that every man hath time not to do, what he ought not. And as for the *positive* parts of religion, whether it consists in the exercise of our minds, or in the external acts of religion; no man is so distressed, but hath

hath time to think of heaven and eternity ; to love God, to esteem and delight in him above all things. This a man may do very frequently and acceptably, while labouring and travelling about his worldly affairs ; his hand may be on the plough and his heart with God ; he may converse here on earth, while his thoughts and affections are in heaven. All men have time to pray to God every day, for his mercy and forgiveness, for his grace and assistance, for preservation and support, and to thank him heartily for all his blessings and benefits. And a little time seriously employed in this kind, will have the same acceptance with God, as the longer and more solemn devotions of those, who have greater leisure and opportunities for them. At least we have all of us time to serve God on the Lord's day, to employ it wholly in the exercises of piety, and the care of our immortal souls.

But when all is done, this is the case of very few, for most of us may say with *Seneca*, ' We are not thrifty, but prodigal of time, and profusely lavish it away on folly and vanity.' Our vices and lusts, our pleasures and diversions, divert and consume those precious hours, which should be employed to these better purposes ; nay, it often happens that time is a burthen to us, lies on our hands, and we know not how to get rid of it ; and yet we chuse rather to let it run waste, than to bestow it on religion, and the care of our souls, to prepare and provide for eternity.

But others pretend it will be time enough hereafter to mind these things. This directly contradicts the former pretence, *that* supposeth religion required more time than many have to spare ; for *this* would make us believe a little time is sufficient, even just when we are going out of the world. But of all others, this is the strangest interpretation of seeking *the kingdom of God and his righteousness,*

to



to put it off to the very last. To think that religion, the great work of our lives, can so quickly be dispatched ; that the time of sickness, and old age, nay, the hour of death, if well employed, will be sufficient for the purpose ; is a very great error, and will prove a fatal mistake. For alas ! what can we then do, that in reason will be thought acceptable to God, or available to ourselves ? perhaps we shall not then have *sense* enough, to make a will, and dispose of our temporal concerns ; and can we think *that* a fit time to repent of the sins and miscarriages of our whole life, and make our peace with God ? Our Saviour hath sufficiently cautioned us against this desperate folly, by the parable of the *foolish virgins*, who having trifled away their time till the bridegroom was coming, and neglected to get oil into their lamps, that is, to be prepared and qualified for the kingdom of heaven, found, when too late, that the door was shut against them. It was then endless to supply themselves by borrowing of others.

Many indeed deceive themselves, hoping when they have no grace and goodness of their own, to be supplied like these *foolish virgins*, out of another's store, from the treasure of the church, from the redundant super-abounding works and merits of the saints ; but these hopes are without any foundation of truth and reason. The *wise virgins* knew not of any merit they had to spare, it was the *foolish virgins* only, that entertained this senseless conceit. *The foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out ; but the wise answered, saying not so, lest there be not enough for us and you.* It plainly appears they had no notion of any works of merit or supererogation. There are also those among ourselves, who having been careless and remiss in seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, hope to be supplied out of the infinite treasure
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of Christ's merits ; but this is likewise a vain hope. For tho' there is merit enough in the death and sufferings of Christ to save all mankind, yet no one can lay claim thereto, without performing the conditions of the gospel.

Others think by sending for the minister, when the physician hath given them over, to receive in a few hours such advice and direction as they can give, that this will do their business as effectually, as if they had minded religion all their lives long ; and that a few prayers said over them, when they are just embarking for another world, will, like a magical wind, immediately waft them into the regions of bliss and immortality. But let us not deceive ourselves, God will not be mocked ; we may defer our repentance so long, that a late application to God, and crying to him, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, will not be regarded, but we shall be answered, *depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not*. And if we would not have this sentence to pass on us, let us *first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, that having our fruit unto holiness, the end may be everlasting life.

To conclude, religion is most reasonable in itself, it directly tends to the happiness of men, and is really calculated for our benefit ; but an irreligious vicious course of life is hurtful and injurious to every man. Let the sinner himself declare, whether he hath found by experience, that lewdness and intemperance hath been more for his health, than if he had lived chastely and soberly ; hath falsehood and injustice in the end, proved more for his interest, than truth and honesty ? Hath any habitual vice raised him truer friends and a better reputation, than the practice of holiness and virtue would have done ? Hath he found that peace and satisfaction of mind, that quiet and enjoyment of himself, that comfortable assurance of God's favour, and good hopes

of his future condition, in an evil course, as a religious and virtuous life would have afforded? Nay, have not some of his vices weakned his body, impaired his health, ruined his estate, and reduced himself to want? What notorious vice is there that doth not blemish a man's reputation, and make him hated and despised, not only by the wise and virtuous, but even by the generality of men? Besides, a wicked man is seldom free from the stings of a guilty conscience, the torments of a restless uneasy mind, the secret dread of God's displeasure, and the vengeance of another world. This the sinner, would he deal fairly and impartially, must acknowledge to be true, from his own sad experience. Religion then is apparently for the benefit of every person. And the interests of this world may in general be as effectually promoted and pursued, nay even to a greater advantage, by living soberly, righteously and godly in this world, than by a contrary course of life. And did men truly and wisely love themselves, they would become religious, for no man can serve his own interest better, than by serving God.

DISCOURSE XLVI. Bp. Hickman.

An early piety a necessary duty.

Eccles. 11. 9.

*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart
cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the
ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes ;
but know that for all these things God will bring
thee into judgment.*

IN this book of *Ecclesiastes*, *Solomon* calls him-
self the preacher, thinking it no disparage-
ment to his royal dignity, to descend from govern-
ment to instruct his people. God had blessed him
with the greatest wisdom, and the circumstance of
his reign, afforded him sufficient experience in the
world ; so that having observed and tried the several
courses of human life, in this book he sums up all
his observations, for the honour of God, and the
benefit of succeeding ages. Here he has shewed us
the true bounds of wisdom and folly, what is either
profitable or hurtful to the sons of men ; the pow-
erful inclinations which we have to vice, and the
more powerful motives to allure us to virtue.
Here the ways of God are faithfully related, the
nature of man is perfectly described, and the ne-
cessary connexion between folly and repentance,
sin and judgment, is exactly shewn. Here he re-
counts all the follies of his youth, and the excur-
sions of his riper years ; his fond pursuits after
pleasure and mirth, women and wine, and all things
which

which vain and inconsiderate men are apt to set their hearts upon; and he sums up all in this short sentence, *vanity of vanity, all is vanity*. Tho' the words of my text are principally directed to the young, yet they comprehend the whole compass of our lives, and may serve for instruction to every age; they shew us how naturally youth begins in folly and sin, which necessarily leads us to repentance in our riper years, and if continued in, brings us to judgment, at our latter end. In the following discourse, I shall consider,

The inclinations of youth, and the vanity of them, which cannot be more elegantly expressed, than in the former parts of the text; wherein *Solomon* artificially exposes the humour of that age, by shewing how it indulges its own fancy, and affects nothing more than a boundless, uninterrupted flow of pleasures. He knew the natural heat and giddiness of youth; how want of experience renders them incapable of advice, and impatient of contradiction or restraint; and who even take a pride in rejecting all prudence, and consideration. All this the preacher knew, and therefore did not attempt to stop the young man in his course, by crossing the current of his pleasures; but he allows him the full scope and swing of his lusts, and lets him follow his own inclinations, to see what will be the end. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine eyes*. And tho' this at first sight seems very pleasing; yet if we view it nearer, we shall find the passage so full of danger, as rather to discourage a wise man's attempt, than invite his curiosity.

As first; *Rejoice, O young man*. And what is joy, but folly and want of consideration? It is to
give

give ourselves up to a heedless intemperate life, to discard our reason least it should reprove our vanity; it is acquiring such a habit of mind, as not only endangers our souls, but is unsuitable to our nature. The providence of God has dispensed to every man a mixture of good and evil in this world; and every wise man will be contented with that alloy. But if we separate the bitter from the sweet, what shall we do when we come to the bottom of the portion, where the dregs will be all bitterness, and that God besides puts *trembling into our cup*. A wise heathen observed, *that true joy is a serious thing*; and a wiser than he, said of laughter, *that it is madness*; and of mirth, *what does it?* It only deludes us with false appearances of happiness, brings us into a pleasant vale, where is a snake lurking in the grass, which at last proves to be *the valley of the shadow of death*. Thus our pleasure leads us into a fool's paradise, and there leaves us to lament our loss of it. It seduces us from the paths of virtue and honour, into a smooth way, and then draws a mist before our eyes, that we may not see the precipice to which it leads. It gives a loose to our passions, and banishes that wisdom which is our best guard and defence. *Rejoice, O young man*; but know, that whilst thou invitest the tempter into thy bosom, instead of filling thy heart with joy, thou emptyest it of all thy virtue. Again,

Rejoice, O young man in thy youth: But what is there in youth to occasion such rejoicing? Youth is a time of weakness and inexperience, and is generally so ill-managed as to prove a reproach to our age; and is this matter of joy? Is this a proper season to rejoice, when we are sowing the seeds of a long repentance? Is this a time to trust our virtue without a guard, when our reason is weak, and our passions strong? From whence proceeds this confidence, or what can we find in our youth to create

in us this assurance? Is want of understanding a happiness, or want of experience a commendation? How powerful a thing is ignorance in so perverse a thing as man? But as youth is a time of strength and vigour, for then our spirits are active and our humour gay; therefore the young man regards pleasure as his portion, and so resolves to go on, rejoicing in his lot.

And let thy heart cheer thee, in the days of thy youth: That is, improve all opportunities of joy and take thy pleasure, for nature is now in its prime, and therefore enjoy the blessings of life whilst it is fresh and fragrant. It is true, that youth, like the spring, is a time of hopes; and yet 'tis only the hopes of a joyful harvest; for then is the proper time for joy: But why should we flatter ourselves with the hopes of a glorious harvest, which perhaps we may never reap? Again, youth is a time of strength and vigour. But, alas! how short, how uncertain is that time and strength? How liable is youth to be supplanted by a disease, or untimely death? All this the young man, ignorant as he is, cannot but know. But tho' his understanding informs him better, yet as prudence and forecast are the things he hates, he will persist to *walk in the ways of his heart*, whatever happens; and will not *depart from the sight of his eyes*, for all the good morals in the world; and therefore resolves to allow himself the full scope of his inclinations, and to run desperately on, wheresoever his fancy will lead, or his passions drive him. But is a young man so wise as to be trusted without a guide, when age itself, with all his experience, stands in need of good advice? 'Tis a dangerous thing for the wisest man to lean *unto his own understanding*; with what confidence then can the young man presume to *walk in the ways of his heart, and the sight of his eyes*, when his eyes and his heart are so blind

blind and deceitful? And yet tell him of his danger, and he will despise the information, disdain all advice, and pursue his own course, tho' the *ways of his heart*, and the folly of his eyes, lead him directly to the *chambers of death*.

These are the follies and dangers of youth. But if the rashness and ignorance of that age be no excuse for such a weak course of life; how much more inexcusable are they, who continue the same practice in their riper years, and carry their youthful vices with them to the grave? When experience and years have improved our reason and understanding, and given us a judgment of discretion, what a shame is it that we should deliver ourselves up to the government of our passions and lusts, and, forgetting the gravity of our age, be captivated like children with every trifling pleasure. How can we hear the voice of God, upbraiding our folly and denouncing judgment against us and not be afraid? *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart and in the sight of thine eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.* Which leads me to consider the restraint that religion puts upon us, and the great reason we have to comply with the apprehensions of a future judgment.

The consideration of a future judgment is enough to confound our lusts, baffle all our enjoyments, and allay the extravagant follies and heats of youth; for what comfort will he receive from all the rejoicings of his youth, or what profit will it be to him to have *walked in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes*; when that indecent liberty he so unseasonably used, will tend only to make his death, and the sense of his never dying pains the more intolerable? How dismal will be the remembrance of his sins, when he shall consider that they brought him into

this place of torment, and lost him those pleasures, *which eye hath not seen, nor the heart of man conceived.* When the irreverfible decree is once paffed upon him, what would he not give to reverfe the fentence? What lufis of the flefh, what pleasures of the body, what fin of the foul would he not give up to redeem himfelf? Such reflections as thefe will aggravate our punifhment, and increafe the torments of hell. This is a worm in our confcience *that never dies, that never goes out.* A wounded fpirit is the moft exquisite pain; the wrath of God in judgment is what no mortal can bear: 'Tis fuch a burden as the young man with all his fpirit cannot remove, nor can the old hardy finner be proof againft it. For tho' we have *hardened our hearts like the nether milftone,* yet God can foften them again, and by putting fears and terrors into our fouls, prepare them for the impreffions of his wrath.—Confider thefe things, and then *rejoice, O young man,* if thou darest, and let *thy heart chear thee* if it can; for to what purpose fhouldft thou *trult to the fight of thine eyes,* or follow *the ways of thine heart,* when thou knoweft that God will fhortly bring thee to judgment; and then this heart of thine, which now flatters and betrays thee, will accufe, condemn, and torment thee?

Since then we have juft reafons from our fins, to apprehend the dreadfulnefs of this judgment, what remains, but that we in time provide for our fecurity, and immediately begin a wifer courfe of life? Surely, we will no longer trifle with God's judgments, but offer up to him our darling vices; *now while we have fome pleasure in them:* So lively, fo early a facrifice will be accepted. But to do this when the decays of age fhall come, and our pleasure abandon us, is a forced virtue, and deferves no thanks. Let us then, before it be too late, check the intemperance of our lufis, abate our immoderate

rate desire of any pleasure, and possess our souls with more serious reflections. Let us consider, that we are the offspring of heaven, of a divine extraction, and sent by God into this world to govern and subdue our sinful appetites. Let us correct the extravagance of our ways, and make God's law our only rule. Let us so rejoice in our youth, that in our riper years, and when old age comes, we may long for that time, when *God shall bring us into judgment*, and then receive our doom with comfort. And that we may the more effectually proceed herein, it may be proper to consider this kind memento of Solomon; *Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* And a plain interpretation of these words, will lead us to a practical application of what has been said. And,

First, The remembrance of our creator obliges us to pay him that love and obedience, which is the natural tribute of his mercy. Whatsoever we enjoy is the bountiful gift of his goodness, the product of his creation, and therefore it should remind us of our great benefactor. The world is a register or catalogue of his noble acts; in the volume of this book we may read in beautiful characters the name of God; and that infinite is his mercy, and wonderful his works. With what admirable order and convenience has he created this world, making it fit for our entertainment, and every creature therein, to serve for our nourishment, ornament, or defence. So that if we do not forget ourselves, we must needs *remember our creator*, and acknowledge his just title to our obedience. And who so deserv-
ing to command, as he that created man? Who so proper to give us laws, as he who knows the secrets of our hearts? And therefore, with a ready compliance to his commands, and a resigned submission

to his will, we should remember our creator, and confess, that as it is our happiness to be created, so 'tis our honour to be commanded by him.

Secondly, We should remember our creator with fear and reverence. There is so much majesty in the name of creator, as should strike an awful dread into our hearts, and create a reverence within us; *we should fall down and kneel before him*, when we *remember the Lord our maker*. No submission can be too low; if we humble ourselves to the dust, it is but from whence he raised us up; and if he has exalted us to a higher station, we should therefore pay him the honour due unto his name. And if God has given us beauty and strength, the vigor of youth, and opportunities of pleasure; let us not in the enjoyment of these good things, forget that God who created both them and us; least we should provoke his wrath, whose power is mighty to destroy, as well as to create.

Thirdly, When we *remember our creator* we should also pay him a religious and holy worship, which is the natural result of his power and mercy, the genuine composition of our love and fear; and what can we his creatures do less, than fall down and worship him for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life. This is what we properly call the service of God, and which all nations in the world have acknowledged to be his due; even a very heathen has observed, 'That no nation was ever so barbarous, as to live without religion; or so foolish, as to hope for the goods of the earth, without paying their devotion to the gods in heaven.' Thus we see, that an obedient, devout, religious life, is what *Solomon* advises us to, in these words, *remember thy creator*. But tho' this is a matter of very weighty importance, and of the utmost concern to us; yet our giddy minds are apt to adjourn the consideration of it till old age, or that
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some kind affliction has brought us to a better way of thinking. I shall therefore consider the time when this duty is to be performed.

And the wise man's direction is, remember *now* thy creator, this very instant, delay not so necessary a duty, since we can call no day our own but the present; and if we do not remember our creator *now*, it may be feared we never shall. The time past is already dead, the time to come is yet unborn, but the present is our life, and the *living, they shall praise God.* If a religious life be ever a duty, it is so now, this very moment; and therefore, without the greatest presumption, we cannot defer it till to-morrow. The very first grounds and principles of religion, teach us to worship and serve God, all the days of our lives. And God knows, the service of every day requires our most serious endeavour, and all that the morrow can do, is to *take care of the things of itself.* Therefore, *remember thy creator now*, and trifle not away the present time, but make every day a pattern of thy whole life; perform thy duty, and make up thy accounts every night, so wilt thou be always ready to appear before God.

But some will say, that perhaps *now* is an unreasonable time; it may be the prime of our youth, and what need we be so early called to our duty. No, says the preacher, you must remember thy creator *now*, in the *days of thy youth*; to defer it may be too late, therefore obey the first summons. And the more early thou attendest thy duty, the better it will be accepted, and the easier performed. Dedicate unto God the first fruits of thy life, and that will make all thy succeeding years holy and happy; offer up to him devout sacrifices in the spring of thy age, and he will bless thee with many fruitful harvests. This is the most proper time to frame and model our minds, according to the will
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of God; for now our faculties are fresh and vigorous, our wills compliant, and our understandings free from prejudice. At these tender years we shall receive impressions with ease, and by use retain them. But if we suffer our vices to grow into habits, they will soon triumph over our virtue, and sin and death will quickly get dominion over us. 'Tis therefore for our ease, as well as security, to apply ourselves betimes to that work, which by delay gets advantage over us every moment. Therefore let us speedily correct and reform our errors, and turn from *all our evil ways*, for they lead to the chambers of death.

There are others who think, that as death commonly gives warning, before he strikes, by some diseases or natural decays, to admonish us of our approaching end, that it will be then time enough to *redeem our time*, when the *days are evil*; directly contrary this to the advice of *Solomon*, who bids us *remember our creator*, before those *evil days come*. For what commendation is it, to grow virtuous by force, to be frighted into our duty, and never leave our sins till they have forsaken us? What merit is there in a rebel's laying down his arms, when he can hold them no longer? Therefore let us remember our creator before we are driven to the last extremity; lest our forgetfulness of God, should force him to strike us with a sudden destruction, and not give us time to pray, that *we may die the death of the righteous*.

Lastly, the sensual man has yet one more pretence; that as there is *a time for all things*, therefore old age is the most proper season for such a melancholy, mortifying work. Indeed, had we nothing else to do than only to repent, a sick or death-bed might serve our turn: But it is not repentance only, but amendment that is required; not only a *death unto sin*, but a *life unto righteousness*; and to this duty we must

must come with vigour, and chearfully undertake the work. We must *remember our creator before those years draw nigh, when a man shall say, I have no pleasure in them.* We must not make our devotion an act of necessity, but of choice. God expects a free-will offering, the prime of our flocks, the richest of our treasures. But if we consume these upon our lusts, and assign him the refuse of our years, we may expect him to send us for our reward, to those *Gods whom we have chosen in our prosperity, and let them deliver us out of our distress, if they can.*

But it is a great mistake to think, that pleasure is inconsistent with religion; and that there is no difference between a sour and a sober life: Nay, 'tis a great disparagement to God, and a discouragement to all good men, to pretend that there is no piety but in a gloomy soul, and a dejected countenance. In our repentance we mourn, and with just reason; but in the acts of obedience, why reserved and grave? In the exercises of devotion, *why so heavy, O my soul, why so disquieted within me.* Surely, to live always as in a state of penance, is no good symptom in any man, no great sign of religion; for it can be no commendation of his piety, to be always grieving, but yet never to repent.

True religion was, no doubt, designed to improve our nature, to complete our happiness, and to shew man in his true perfection: To fill us with exalted thoughts, to entertain us with lively notions and generous desires; that we should *serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.* It is not so much the formality of the tribute, as the willing mind, and the chearful giver that God respects; but what pleasure can he possibly have in those services of ours, which we *ourselves have no pleasure in.* If therefore we find ourselves

ourselves in health and strength, plentiful in our fortunes, and vigorous in our minds, let us not prostitute these noble gifts of God, to profane, ungodly uses; and think they were given us only to make *provision for our flesh*, and to *fulfil our lusts*; and when all is gone, that then 'tis time enough to return unto God. But when we enjoy our heart's desire, then let us deem it the properest season to pay him our devotion; for when we are most fit for pleasure, then are we fittest for religion; then is our heart a noble sacrifice indeed, and worthy of our creator; a present fit to be made to the great God of heaven and earth, because with such sacrifices he is well pleased. But if it is unfortunately broken with age, and bruised with iniquity, yet even then it is the best we have to give, and a *bruised broken heart, is a sacrifice that God will not despise*. Therefore, whatever our circumstances are, whether we are in health, or lie under any affliction, calamity, or decay, let us take care to hasten our repentance, and *redeem the time, because the days are evil*.

DISCOURSE XLVII. *Dorrington.*

Religion easy and pleasant.

Mat. xi. 30.

My yoke is easy, and my burthen is light.

THE great degeneracy of human nature appears, from that averfeness which most men seem to have, to a religious, virtuous life. Religion is the best ornament and glory, the true and compleat

complete perfection of human nature. And yet one of the chief prejudices against an holy life, is the imagination, that religion is a task too hard for our nature, if not impossible to be performed. Our Saviour therefore, to caution and encourage us against this fatal prejudice, says, *take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden light.* That is, “be careful to observe my commands, and submit to my government. I do not require things impossible to be performed, nor will the difficulties you meet with be invincible. Only take up the yoke that I have borne, for I am of a meek and submissive mind, and disdain not to be subject to the laws of religion. I command no more than what I have practised, and by your imitating my obedience to these laws, you will find rest to your souls. This shall produce peace and happiness to you.” I shall endeavour to shew from these words, in what sense the commands of God are easy to be observed; and how we may render them so.

It must be acknowledged, that there will be a continual opposition to a religious course of life, from the frequent assaults and temptations of the world and the devil. But these are difficulties we may easily conquer, by an earnest and diligent endeavour: Our Saviour bids us strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able. By the strait gate, is here meant religion; which we cannot enter into and practise, without using our best endeavours. To the lazy and indolent, religion is difficult; but if we apply ourselves with earnestness and patience to be religious, we shall find it easy to keep the commands of God, by his assistance, which he will afford to all them who come *boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* And

And whoever will seriously endeavour to perform their duty, God will be ever ready to assist them, and enable them to will and to do according to his good pleasure. Religion being most suitable to the frame and constitution of our nature, is abundantly more easy than vice and wickedness; because religion is the rectitude of our nature, but vice is the deformity and corruption of it. All vehement passions and unlawful lusts are departures from true and right nature; and therefore wickedness must be most difficult and troublesome. For as virtue is most natural, it must be most easy. Hence it is, that violent and furious passions disorder the mind, confound our thoughts, dissipate and spend the spirits. And is not an excessive, inordinate motion of the mind more troublesome to a man, then when it is calm, serene and quiet? Is it not much more easy, and pleasant to use with moderation and temperance the pleasures of sense, than to abuse them by excess? For the one soothes and cherishes nature, when the other weakens and impairs it. Nor indeed can any man arrive at a great degree of wickedness, without taking much pains; and there is scarce one reigning sin, but what requires more to gratify and serve it, than is necessary to answer all the obligations of religion. Many vices cost men a great deal more, than religion demands in acts of charity. How often do we see covetousness wearying the body with labour, racking the mind with care, depriving men of their necessary rest, and denying them the due enjoyment of what they have, in a much larger degree than religion ever required. Inordinate lusts demand such hard things as these; when the practice of religion is easily satisfied, without hazarding or impairing our health, estate, or strength. And there are many thousands more martyrs to sin and wickedness in the world at all times, than ever there were to religion, under the
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most cruel persecutions. For the servants of sin are slaves to many masters, whose commands are always peremptory, and frequently contrary to each other; so that they must put off the demands of one lust to satisfy another. There is generally more self-denial used in the service of one darling lust, than is required by all the laws of religion; and would people take as much pains to be religious, as to accomplish their worldly designs, the number of good men would be very considerable among us: But the misfortune is, men will submit to labour and take pains to be vicious, and yet, in affairs of religion, they will be remiss, careless, and negligent. Having thus shewn in what sense religion is easy; I shall next propose such methods as will considerably lessen the difficulty that sometimes attends the practice of it.

Besides the diligent use of the appointed means of grace, such as prayer, hearing God's holy word, and the sacraments, without the due observance of which we cannot expect to be good and religious, we must also resolve faithfully to keep the commands of God; but faint wishes and instable purposes will never effect this. He who halts between two opinions, one while intending to be religious, and soon after returning to his sins, will find it always difficult to do well. An unresolved mind magnifies the difficulty of religion, but good resolutions encrease our strength, and enables us to perform our duty. Thus in other matters; if a man be fully resolved to prosecute any design, no difficulty shall discourage him; desire and resolution will make him strive till he overcomes.—Let us then duly consider, that a religious life is absolutely necessary to our tranquillity and happiness, both in this and a future state; and that we must be religious, to save our souls from everlasting torments. Necessity and power dwell near together; and when we perceive the

the absolute necessity of our being religious, in order to the salvation of our souls, this will so animate our endeavours and resolutions, that no difficulties will be able to withstand them. And that we may make religion as easy as possible, we must soon begin to be religious. We take all impressions the best in our younger years. Vices are then like tender plants, easily rooted up and destroyed; and virtues, by being early inured to them, will grow familiar and easy. But if we do not when young begin to be religious, evil inclinations will grow into habits, which will encrease the difficulty of religion to the highest degree. Again,

In order to make religion easy to us, we must be stedfast and diligent in the practice of it. The constant repetition of the same act begets an habit, which at last renders such actions familiar and easy. Practice will overcome the greatest difficulties. *Chuse you the best course of life, and custom will render it the pleasantest*, was the advice of *Pythagoras* to his scholars. The more we exercise ourselves in the duties of religion, the more easy they will be to us. If we are unsteady, we shall be always weak; if constant, we shall encrease in strength. *The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that bath clean hands, shall grow stronger and stronger* †. Spiritual strength, like what is natural, encreases by diligent exercise; and the more that encreases, the more easy will our duty be. Lastly, we must carefully avoid all temptations to sin. For a man to be careless in this matter, and yet complain of the difficulty of religion, is a meer absurdity; because it is his own folly that encreases the difficulty. Whoever entertains any temptations to sin, can never easily abstain from it, nor live a virtuous, good life. Temptation and opportunity are to our evil inclinations, like oyl to a fire, which will encrease its strength and force. We

† Job 17. 9.

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We must therefore weaken the fire of concupiscence, by avoiding those temptations, which are apt to draw us into sin. If we use these methods, such our endeavours will render religion very easy to us, and we shall then find what our Saviour says to be true, *my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

And let us consider, that we have the example of our Saviour, to encourage us in this duty; who tho' he had not those inward hindrances that we are incumbered with, yet he was not free from many external discouragements and temptations. He suffered many indignities and persecutions from men, and even died for the testimony he bore to truth. He was obedient unto death, even the most ignominious and miserable, that of the cross. Nothing could divert him from doing his father's will, and perfecting the work he came into the world about. And it greatly recommends the yoke, he requires us to take up, as being the same that he endured. He bids us to learn submission and obedience by his example. He spent his whole life in a ready conformity to God's will, and tho' himself God, he became subject to his laws. And all this he did for our sakes, to satisfy the demands which we could not answer, and to purchase for us the glorious reward of perfect obedience. And shall we refuse to take a little pains to please him, who denied himself so much, and condescended so far to save us from eternal misery? Or can we think, that to follow him in obedience to God, is not a necessary condition of our finding favour with him, and of obtaining his intercession for us, at the great day of judgment?

And as religion is thus easy, so also is it pleasant in practice; *her ways are ways of pleasantness.* Solomon here by *wisdom*, means religion, or a good and virtuous life. He who lives a religious life, has joy and pleasure in abundance. This I will endeavour

deavour to make appear, by shewing, that the performance of religious exercises is very pleasant, and also exceedingly grateful and pleasing to a man, on a reflection and review thereof. These two points, I hope to prove, to the conviction of every serious considerate person.

That the performance of good and religious actions is very pleasant, appears from hence, that the principle from whence all true and sincere religion proceeds and springs, is love; and which therefore cannot but render the practice of it very delightful. All the duties we perform towards God and man, must proceed from love to both. He that truly loves God, cannot but endeavour to do whatever will please him; and he will strive to avoid what is offensive to him. He will delight to contemplate the divine perfections, to adore and worship the God he loves, and to give him honour and glory. And he that loves his neighbour sincerely, will delight in, and desire the welfare and happiness of men; he will endeavour to promote it all he can. A religious life is only the exercise of love, and which proves the pleasantness of it. He who is forced to his duty by fears and terrors, performs it with reluctance and sorrow; but he whom love inspires, proceeds with joy. He is not weary nor discouraged with any difficulties. This renders the labours of religion easy, and even sufferings delightful. This made the primitive Christians to encounter with, and submit to the most cruel and tormenting deaths, with pleasure and joy unspeakable. For *love is strong as death* *. I now proceed to shew, that religion is exceeding grateful and pleasant to a man, on a serious review and reflection upon it. This will appear from the following particulars.

The

* Cant. 8. 6.

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The good actions of men are in some measure to be imputed to themselves ; We are not governed by destiny and fate, to do good or evil, but we act with judgment, choice and free-will. As the good we do may be ascribed to the influence of divine grace, so may it be in part to ourselves ; for God has not made man like beasts or trees, incapable to judge or chuse, but endued him with a power to do both ; or otherwise, there would be no virtue or vice in the world. God hath *set life and death before us* ; which supposes a freedom and liberty of will in us, to chuse the one or the other. And since rewards and punishments, are proposed to men according to their good and evil actions, these must in some degree be imputed to them, because within their own power of acting. From hence it is natural for good actions, to give a man just cause to applaud and commend himself for doing them ; and this must convince any one, that the ways of wisdom, or religion, are ways of pleasantness ; that to review and reflect on religious actions must afford an exceeding great pleasure. Again,

Religion requires nothing of us, but what every man upon serious consideration, must be perfectly satisfied in ; nothing that he needs be ashamed of, or condemn himself for doing. How just and reasonable are the duties of piety towards God ? That we reverence and adore an infinitely glorious and excellent being ? That we trust in, and heartily love the source and foundation of all good ? That we obey the commands of the supreme sovereign of the world ; resign and submit ourselves entirely to his providence, who is the all-wise disposer and governor of all things ? That we praise and acknowledge his glorious perfections, and sincerely thank him, for all the good things we enjoy by means of his free bounty ? What can be more equitable, and consonant to right reason, than these things ?

things? How highly reasonable and just are the two fundamental rules of our duty, that we do unto others, as we would they should do unto us, and love our neighbours as ourselves. How fit is it for us to shew mercy, who need mercy? to be ready to perform all kind of offices to our neighbour, when we should desire the same from others? How reasonable is it for us to be honest and faithful to others, when we always want them to act so by us? Hence then it appears, that every instance of duty towards our neighbour, is most just and reasonable. And what satisfaction and pleasure must it afford that man, who has acted suitable to his reason, and performed his duty to God and his neighbours?

The dignity and nobleness of good actions will naturally make a man applaud himself for doing them, and to reflect upon and review them with delight and pleasure. A man who is actuated by the principles of religion, lives up to the highest and most sublime capacities of his nature. For to be truly religious, is to lead the life of angels on earth. *They perform the commandments of God and hearken to his voice* †. The pious man, by carefully performing his duty to God, joins himself to that noble company, is a *fellow citizen of the saints, and of the household of God*; when we worship and praise God, we join with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven. When we endeavour to promote God's glory, to resist the temptations that assault us, then we are taking part with them, against the devil and his angels; and this surely will afford us delight and pleasure, and redound greatly to our honour.

There is a farther excellency and dignity in a good and virtuous life, namely, its conformity to the ever blessed God. When any persons become righteous and holy, such are said to be renewed after

† Psal. 103. 20.

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after his image and likeness †. So that when we rightly perform our duties to men, then do we imitate and resemble the most excellent and perfect Being. When we return good for evil, are sincere and true, just and righteous, bear with the infirmities of others, forgive those who injure us, are beneficial to mankind according to our circumstances, and do all the kind offices we can, this is a noble imitation of God's abundant goodness; and such a good and virtuous life is truly great and excellent. This renders the man highly deserving the respect and esteem both of God and men. And whoever is possessed of such valuable accomplishments, and has an humble thankful sense thereof, without pride or vain glory, the thoughts of it must needs afford him much delight and pleasure.

Another reason for a man to take pleasure in reflecting on his good actions, is the thoughts of having thereby pleased God. It is grateful and pleasant to consider, that by discharging our duty, we have dignified and exalted our nature; but it is an additional pleasure, that we have also pleased God; the wisest Being, the judge of all, whom to please will be our greatest advantage; a master so good and bountiful, as will amply reward all our performances of duty. The consideration of those glorious and immortal joys, which a virtuous and religious life must naturally raise an expectation of, in the minds of good men, will enable them to approve and commend themselves, for having followed a life of piety. How much happiness and felicity may be expected, from infinite goodness and love, by that man, who is assured of his having pleased God, and of obtaining his favour? A Being most liberal in his promises, and most faithful in his performance of them. The good man then cannot but rejoice in hope, when he knows that in a short time he

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shall

† Ephes. 4. 24.

shall be removed from this wicked, miserable world, to a place, where only holiness, goodness, and happiness dwell. And whoever considers, that these are the advantages attending a good life, will be inwardly pleased that he has pursued a constant course of piety, from whence he may reap such great and inestimable benefits, and derive to himself so much honour and felicity. How will he then find it worth his time and care, to have performed the greatest labours in religion, to have exercised the severest self-denials, to have endured the greatest sufferings, when he considers, that by these means, he will be entitled to endless rest and peace, to unmixed pleasure and full satisfaction, to the eternal glory and felicity of heaven. Thus have I sufficiently proved, what the wise man says, that the ways of *wisdom or religion, are ways of pleasantness.*

To conclude; the design of religion is not to make us refuse and abstain from all the pleasing things of this world. We are allowed to take and use soberly and thankfully whatever we can lawfully obtain of God's blessings. But we are not to give ourselves up entirely to the pursuit and enjoyment of worldly and sensual pleasures. He that governs himself wisely will be careful to enjoy the pleasures of this life so, as not to lose those of the next world. And indeed, the pleasures of religion are the strongest and sweetest. They possess more of a man, and sink deeper into his mind, than those that only affect the body and senses. The mind of man has the greatest desire and capacity, and is much more sensible of pleasure and pain, than the body. The psalmist, speaking of the excellency of religious pleasure, or the practice of religion and virtue, says of God's law, *It is sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb* *. Since then there is so much pleasure in doing well, this should dissuade men

* Psal. 119. 10.

men from the guilty pursuits and enjoyments of the vanities of this world. Guilt vastly allays the greatest sensual pleasures. *In the midst of guilty laughter the heart is sad.* Whoever uses these regularly and soberly, according to the rules of religion will, always find them most pleasing and delightful. By this method he will not hurt his body, nor his soul, neither his estate nor neighbour, while he thus pleases his appetites and gratifies his senses; and will also escape a troubled conscience. But the irregular and intemperate man becomes a slave to the pleasures of this world, and utterly deprives himself of those of religion. In a virtuous and religious life, a man may enjoy both, but in that which is wicked and impious, he enjoys neither. Let all men then be persuaded to the practice of a religious good life. It was said by the spirit of God, that the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, with design to recommend them to the sons of men. This should much rather induce men to be wise and virtuous, and pursue their true happiness, than to make them guilty of folly and sin, of what is shameful and hurtful, and which will incur their everlasting misery. And how great an obligation to obedience is it, that the laws of religion are thus contrived by almighty God, as to make the instances of our duty so reasonable, just and good, that we may take delight therein, and the performance of which will reward itself. But it must exceedingly aggravate our wickedness, shew our love to sin and enmity to God, if we will rather refuse all this happiness and pleasure, than submit ourselves to the laws of righteousness and religion.

DISCOURSE XLVIII. Abp. Sharpe.

The difficulties attending a religious life considered.

1 John 5. 3.

This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.

IT is the latter part of this text, on which at present I propose to treat, *his commandments are not grievous*. And I would to God we all thought so, for then more of us would endeavour to keep them; but too many have embraced such frightful notions of religion, that they have not courage to engage in it. They imagine it was contrived only for the melancholy or miserable, such whose tempers or unhappy circumstances incapacitate them for the enjoyments of life. Some thinking the precepts of religion impossible to be observed, will not trouble their heads about them; others of not more consideration, think them very hard and severe, tho' not impossible to be kept: they imagine them to be very rigorous impositions, and unreasonable restraints on human nature, requiring so much trouble and pains, that was a person scrupulously to govern himself by them, he must deny himself those common gratifications, which the frame and constitution of things seem to allow mankind.—By such prejudices as these, numbers are mightily discouraged from any serious attention to God and goodness, and think themselves excused from making any profession of religion at all; or if they do, it is such

as is very inconsistent with it. Nothing then can tend more to recommend the serious practice of religion than to vindicate it from these objections. Therefore I shall endeavour fully to prove, that those who entertain such dismal apprehensions of a strictly pious and virtuous life, do labour under a great mistake; and that the duty which God requires of us, so far from being an intolerable or grievous burden on mankind, is, on the contrary, very light and easy. For our Saviour in express terms, hath told us, *that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light* †. And the apostle assures us, *that his commandments are not grievous*.

I do not deny there are difficulties in religion; it would be against the sense and experience of mankind to assert there are none; nay, considering man's corrupt nature, it must be confessed, that it is more difficult, and will require more care and labour to be virtuous than vicious. Every one must acknowledge, that the path of virtue is like going up hill, which requires some pains to be taken; but to live viciously is such a descent, as the degeneracy of mankind, by the help of bad examples, makes very natural and easy. And yet we may affirm, that when all things are considered, it will be found, that as the way of God and virtue is much plainer and easier than that of vice and wickedness, so a man may take less pains to be very good, than very bad; and will more consult his own ease, pleasure and satisfaction, by living a religious, than an irreligious life. For let the greatest difficulties be supposed in religion that possibly can be, yet it is no severe or grievous imposition, but an obligation upon us, that is very natural, easy and delightful. *His commandments are not grievous*. This is the point I am to maintain, and my method shall be to lay down several propositions as so many gradual steps,

whereby to confirm the truth we have advanced, and either to obviate or answer all objections to the contrary. And, I shall prove first,

That religion is a thing not impracticable, but very possible for us to practise. There is not any thing commanded by the laws of Jesus Christ, which is the whole of our religion, but every man may perform if he endeavour it. Take the hardest part of the Christian yoke, namely, to forgive and do good to our enemies, to deny our worldly interests and renounce all we have, when God requires it, for the sake of Jesus Christ; yet these things are not impossible, however severe they may be esteemed. Impossible they cannot be, many having actually done these things, and upon far lighter motives and considerations than what are offered and proposed to us, by the religion of Christ. And if these things are practicable, why should we not think so of all the other Christian precepts; such as owning God for our creator and continual benefactor; paying him our constant tribute of worship, prayer, and praise, both in publick and private; living in an humble sense of his Almighty Majesty and our own unworthiness; using with temperance and moderation the good things which he affords us; being honest, just and faithful in all our dealings; kind, good-natured, and charitable to all our fellow-creatures; in a word, living righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world. And are these things so formidable, as to be hard and impossible for men to live up to them? Surely there can be no rules more easy for the government of our actions, than these are. But perhaps some will say, I have not fairly represented the case; that the impossibility of keeping God's commands doth not lie in any particular instance of duty; for to observe any one precept of the gospel might be practicable enough; but the objection is, that our duty

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is impracticable in the whole, the laws being so many and strict, extending at all times to our thoughts and words, as well as actions, whereby it is impossible for any man so to order his conversation, but that in some instance or other, he must transgress, perhaps every day, and consequently the duty required is too hard for us.

To this I can answer, that when I speak of the possibility of keeping God's commandments, I ever suppose, and would be understood to include the gracious allowances that God hath promised by Christ Jesus to make, for the infirmities of human nature; it being always to be understood in that sense. And if we remember but two things further, this objection will perfectly vanish. The first is, that God, in the laws he gave us by Christ, never intended to require an exact and unsinning obedience to them; but in the gospel sense we are said to obey God's laws, when we use our sincere endeavours to obey them; when in the main of our lives we live up to them; when we do not indulge ourselves in any known wilful course of sin; but as far as the weakness of our nature, and the circumstances of our lives will permit, we do as much as we can to mortify our corrupt affections, and live holy and virtuous lives. And secondly, tho' we have not done this, yet if we do but truly repent of our past sins, so as to forsake them, however great, heinous, and long continued in they have been; even in this case, such a man keeps the commandments of God, and doth all he requires of him. For he performs as much as God, under the gospel covenant, hath promised to accept and reward in the next world. This being the case, to urge the impossibility of keeping God's commandments, as an exception against religion, is both impertinent and unfair, for God expects no man to do more than he can; and whoever uses his honest endeavours

truly to serve God, such an one keeps God's laws, notwithstanding any frailties and infirmities of his life. I now proceed a step farther, and lay down this, as my second proposition ;

That as God's commands are not grievous, on account of their being impossible, so neither are they unnatural, or a force on the constitution of men, as some pretend. Indeed, we allow they are restraints to the licentious practices of men, but not such restraints as to be called invasions or intrenchments on human liberty, because they only mark out the true bounds of that liberty, which is the perfection of human nature ; and whoever transgresseth these bounds, so far from being the more easy or happy, will find himself the more certainly miserable. So long as human nature continues what it is, man's happiness only consists in using his liberty according to the best rules of reason ; which is religion. And to transgress such rules, tho' God had annexed no penalty thereto, would have been of itself a sufficient punishment. This every man is sensible of, who lives in a course of vice and irreligion. He knows and feels that things are not right with him, that his mind is not at ease, in the way he has engaged, because every day he is acting contrary to his reason. Which is an evident proof, that virtue is suitable to our nature, but vice and sin are not. And in truth, it would be as absurd, for any to ask, which is most natural and agreeable to man's constitution, sickness or health, as to enquire whether virtue or vice is so. But it will be said, that men are born with strong inclinations and propensities to pleasure, wealth, power and greatness. That religion puts a dreadful check and restraint on those appetites and passions ; and how then can it be agreeable to nature ? To this I answer, that religion, as taught in the gospel, doth not hinder the satisfaction of any appetites and passions, which
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men are born with. I know no inclination truly natural, but what is allowed to be gratified, if done in proper instances and due measure; if it be fit, just and reasonable; and that it really tends to the true pleasure and happiness of the person concerned. All that our religion forbids, is the irregularity and exorbitancy of our passions and appetites, not so to indulge them, as either to hurt ourselves, or injure our neighbour. These are all the restraints that God's laws lay on us; and judge then, wherein they are so terrible? But to put it out of all doubt, whether virtue or vice is most agreeable to the frame of man's nature, let any one run over the instances of his duty, and the sins opposite thereto, as mentioned in the scripture, and compare them in his own mind one with another, and then honestly declare which of the two will procure him most ease and quiet, and require the least labour, trouble and disturbance; and I doubt not but upon such an examination, every one will readily pronounce, that in all instances, wherein our morals are concerned, those we call virtues, are much more easy, more natural, more delightful, and require abundantly less trouble and pains, than the contrary vices. This every one will find, who runs a parallel between them.

For instance; between meekness and patience on the one hand, fretfulness and discontent on the other. Between love, charity, and doing good; and that of hatred, malice, and desire of revenge. Between chaste and lawful love, and that of unlawful adulterous lusts. Between temperance and using God's blessings with sobriety; and that of gluttony, drunkenness and revellings. Between faith in God, trust in his providence, and contentedness with a competence; and that of a boundless, unsatiable desire of riches. It will be found the same as to all other particular virtues recommended to us by re-

ligion, and their opposite vices. So that, it plainly appears, the commandments of God are neither impossible to be kept, hard or severe in themselves, nor yet grievous on those accounts. But perhaps it will be urged, the state of man is so corrupt, that we have neither will nor power to keep God's laws; our depravity, and the devil's temptation, being too hard for us. And if so, what signifies their being reasonable in their own nature. In order to remove this objection, I must lay down my third proposition, which is,

That let our natural inabilities and aversions to what is good, be as great as possible, yet the supernatural assistance we may expect from God, will be sufficient for us; and notwithstanding those disadvantages, it will be as much in our power and inclination to obey God's commands, as to live contrary thereto. It must be confessed after all that is said, as to the possibility and reasonableness of obeying the gospel precepts, and their agreeableness to our nature, yet that alone is not sufficient to counterballance the great propensity we have, in our corrupt degenerate state, to pursue the ways of vice and sensuality. For we are not only weak and impotent, but a strong bias there is in our nature, to render us averse to spiritual things, and too prone to act what we should not, besides the temptations from without us. But if we consider on the other hand, that God is never wanting to supply by his immediate grace, what is defective in our nature; that Christ hath purchased for us the gift of the Holy Ghost, by which all may easily perform whatever God requires of them, in order to their future happiness; that every man, baptized into Christ's religion, who means honestly, hath God's promise to be continually assisted from above with his divine power and grace, to enable him to do, what by nature he could not; that the holy spirit

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is lodged within us, as a principle to tempt and invite us to be good, and to deter us from what is evil; to guard us against the suggestions of the devil, and our own corrupt hearts; and is as powerful and ready to do good, as our adversary can be, to hurt us. These things considered, it should convince us, that the work of religion is not so difficult, so hopeless an undertaking as some would pretend; since *they that are with us are more than they that are against us*. Tho' the devil and our corrupt natures may strongly tempt us to sin, yet the spirit of Christ and his invisible attendants, will as powerfully incline us to what is good. That divine spirit which dwells with all Christians, or is desirous of doing so, will by his gracious influences and assistances, so subdue the force of the devil's temptations; so smooth our way, and assist our weak natures; that we may find ourselves as powerfully carried on to the practice of virtue and holiness, as a wicked man can be, to live a dissolute, careless, and vicious life.

But it must be further acknowledged, that tho' there are great difficulties in religion, and it requires some pains to serve God, and live in obedience to his commands; yet this is chiefly occasioned by our prejudices, and in being used by evil habits to a contrary course of life. In a little time, these difficulties will wear off, and then we shall find, that a life of sincere religion and devotion, will be far more natural, and delightful, than a course of sin ever was. The truth is, if we consider the reason of most men's aversion to virtue and goodness, we shall find it proceeds from their former vicious habits; having been so long used to a contrary course, that they cannot bear the strictness of religion. On this account religion is indeed troublesome and difficult, and more or less so, in proportion as those customs and habits have prevailed or

not. From hence proceeds all those hardships complained of in religion : When vice gets possession of us, sin grows customary, and becomes as it were a second nature, and then it is no easy matter to expel it ; and to acquire virtuous habits instead thereof, requires labour, pains and time, much struggling and self-denial. But then this is only for a short time, at our first entrance into a religious life, from a course of sin ; for when we are a little inured to the ways of virtue, and have made some tolerable progress therein, it will become easy and pleasant. If custom has such an effect, as to make vice, so contrary to our nature, pleasing and agreeable, surely much more will custom make virtue so ; than which nothing, as I have shewn, can be more suitable and natural to the minds of men. When the strength of evil habits is once broken, and we have made the exercise of religion familiar to us, we shall find as much pleasure and delight in the ways of virtue and piety, as in those of vice and sin. Our aversions to them will then cease, and we shall wonder how we could be so long imposed on by the false appearances of vice. We shall then confess we enjoy true liberty, and shall never be persuaded to return to that hard state of bondage, of serving sin and Satan. In a word, all the difficulties we meet with at first in a religious course, will soon vanish, and then our way will be plain and smooth, or as *Solomon* says, full of *peace and pleasure*.

As to what is objected against a religious life, that it requires much pains and watchfulness, we have seen, that this, so far from being a real difficulty or inconvenience, is in truth the natural effect of our make and constitution. For we cannot possibly be happy but in motion ; and if religion exercises our diligence, it is very unreasonable to charge this as a hardship on religion. We admit that the way of piety demands great care, watchfulness and applica-

application. A good christian must not think to be idle, but ought to be very attentive to his work, and much on his guard, especially at the beginning. Nay, after he has made some considerable attainments in virtue, he will find enough to employ him; and therefore we cannot deny, but the gate to life is very strait, and they who would enter therein, must not only *seek* but *strive*. *They must work out their own salvation, and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure.* But then this is no real difficulty: All this is nothing but a due and natural exercise of our powers. It is agreeable to man's nature to be intent on something or other: The chief pleasure of this life consists in constantly pursuing some design; for to live sluggishly is the way to dull and decay our natural powers, and to make our lives very uneasy. There is no man but will find much more pleasure in being employed, than in sitting still and doing nothing. Action is so essential to our natures, as to be one of the main ingredients of our happiness, both in this life and the next. The state of heaven will chiefly consist in having our natural powers exalted to the utmost pitch of vigour and activity of which they are capable; and being always employed in the contemplation and pursuit of the best and noblest objects.

What makes a man uneasy in labour, is not his being busy and intent upon any thing, but in being employed in such exercises, as either exhaust his animal spirits, or that agrees not with his humour, temper, and genius; or in transacting such business as gives him no prospect of bringing it to good effect. Now the diligence and application requisite in a course of virtue and religion, are attended with none of these inconveniencies; since it puts us to little bodily pain, brings no great weariness or consumption of spirits on us, is not contrary to,

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but exceedingly well agrees with, the constitution and frame of our nature ; and is besides, such a design, that whoever undertakes it, may assuredly promise to himself success. And this being the case of a virtuous life, none ought to think the diligence used therein uneasy or troublesome, but rather as the natural exercise of that heat and vigour, which is implanted in every man : And he who is not thus employed, must let his faculties lie idle, or if he otherwise stirs and busies himself, it must be in a way more troublesome and disagreeable to his nature. It is the great advantage and excellency of a religious life, that it will always find some thing for us to do, so that we shall never be dull in our souls, nor complain that time lies on our hands. It will quicken our diligence and industry, even as to the prosecution of our secular affairs. It will make us solicitous to spend our lives usefully and profitably, and mightily enlarge our powers and designs. It will employ our will, our love and desires, after that which is good, and make us daily more active and vigorous in the prosecution of it, till at last we shall be translated into a state of everlasting, never-ceasing activity. Indeed the scripture calls it a state of rest, and in respect to our resting from all our griefs, troubles, and sufferings, it is so ; but yet it is most truly a state of everlasting motion and activity ; for our souls being then disengaged from the clogs and incumbrances of these earthly bodies, will spend the whole eternity in exerting their powers and faculties to the noblest purposes ; namely, in loving God, in admiring and being delighted with all his wise and wonderful works ; in continually singing praises to our gracious creator and redeemer, and in doing all kind and good-natured offices to our fellow-creatures ; and this with perpetual alacrity, pleasure and joy, without weariness or decay of spirits ; which indeed I take to be the greatest gem in that

crown of righteousness, that shall be conferred on believers at the last day. It then evidently appears, that the all care, industry, and watchfulness, which religion requires from us in this life, ought not to be esteemed as matter of objection to it, since it tends so much to increase our happiness, and to make us enjoy ourselves the better. But,

Lastly, Let all the hardships and difficulties of religion be magnified as much as possible, yet the mighty motives and encouragements we have from the gospel of Christ, to engage therein, will very much outweigh them. We have already acknowledged that there are difficulties in a Christian life; such as arise both from the strictness of the rule we are obliged to walk by, and our averseness to it, as being engaged in contrary practices. But let us also suppose greater difficulties; that to enter on a religious life, is the only way to frustrate our temporal designs, and all our hopes in this world; and that nothing but reproach, ignominy, and persecution will attend us: I say, admitting all this, yet a life of virtue and religion will, to a considerate man, be far more easy and eligible, than the contrary way of living. For, if all things are considered, what God requires of us, is no hard, no grievous imposition, and this will appear for the following reasons. That let the difficulties of religion be never so great, yet God hath promised, to support us under and enable us to overcome them, if we ourselves are but honest.* No temptations shall ever happen to us, but such as are common to men; and whatever they are, God will provide us a way to escape from, or enable us to bear them; for *God is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted, above what we are able* *. And if we are fortified and enabled to vanquish the temptation, it is more than if we had not been tempted; since

* 1 Cor. 10. 13.

by our overcoming the temptation, we may expect a more ample reward in the other world. Again, tho' our religion should be attended with many difficulties, yet the inward comfort, satisfaction, and joy, that a good man enjoys from a good conscience, and the sense of doing his duty, even when persecuted for it, are of great weight to alleviate all the outward pressures and afflictions he undergoes on that account. For suppose a man that lives in all outward prosperity, and enjoys all his heart can wish, but yet is a knave or hypocrite, and hath the stings of a guilty conscience perpetually pursuing him; and that another, who is an innocent virtuous person, suffers very severely in this world, yet as his mind cannot reproach him for doing ill, he has a good conscience, which is a continual feast to him; and will not all agree, that the outwardly happy man, is much the more miserable and most to be pitied of the two.

And if to all this we add the mighty, unspeakable rewards that are promised to all persevering Christians in the next life, and the sad portion which awaits all wicked ungodly men; let the difficulties of religion be never so great, the cross and persecution they suffer for it be never so severe, yet there can be no comparison, as to which is the easiest, and most recommends itself to mankind, either sin or virtue. For let our condition in this world be never so happy and prosperous, yet it is no easy matter to think of dwelling in everlasting burnings: Can we, for a little bravery and splendor, a little pleasure and gratification of our brutish appetites, which we are not certain will last for a year, a month, or even one day; can we for this venture, or rather sell our souls and bodies to the devil, to be for ever tormented? Is this a bargain, that we can please ourselves with the thoughts of? On the other side, if we are sincere lovers of God,

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and disciples of our Lord Jesus, in what miserable circumstances so ever we are in this world, will it not be a cordial sufficient to revive our drooping spirits, in the midst of all our afflictions and tribulations, to think that we are the sons of the most high God ; that we shall be glorified with our Saviour when he comes to appear triumphantly in the view of angels and men, to distribute his rewards to all his faithful servants ; and that, for our light affliction, which endureth but for a moment, we shall receive a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ? Sure I am, these things will not bear a comparison. But every considerate man, from the evidence of truth, must be forced to acknowledge, that, all things considered, it is more easy, safe, desirable, and delightful to be good, to serve God, to live in obedience to his laws, and discharge a good conscience, than to enjoy all the pleasures of sin, which are but for a short season.

DISCOURSE XLIX. Bp. Moor.

Of setting God always before us.

Psalms 16. 8.

I have set the Lord always before me.

THE general and chief design of men, is to possess themselves of what will make life comfortable, and avoid the evils that render it uneasy and troublesome ; and yet so it is, that every state and condition hath a mixture of good and evil. The greater number of men, seem to place their happiness in what they cannot easily obtain, or long possess ;

possess; and even whilst enjoyed, afford not the satisfaction they expected. Dominion, riches, and fame (to procure which men often destroy their health, and constitution, betray their trusts, and wound their reputation) are no essential ingredients of our happiness, no real excellencies and virtues of our nature; since a bad man may enjoy much of them, and yet his heart be distracted with cares and fears; when a good man, in the wise and honest management of a small income, may rest fully contented. As then true felicity is not to be found in the good things without us, we must, in order to discover that real good which will satisfy us, extend our thoughts beyond this world, and look up to the creator of our being, who only can fill our souls with solid peace and lasting joys. *For when he openeth his hand, he satisfieth the desire of every living thing* *: Wherefore let us with humble respect, duty, and affection, say with the royal psalmist, *thou art our Lord*; who wilt counsel us in difficulties, and save us in distress by thy right hand. Let us sincerely put our trust in God, and he will preserve us. We shall then certainly rejoice under the various dispensations of divine providence, and have our souls rest in hope of a glorious resurrection, if we wait on God, duly consider his all-perfect nature, and in all our ways acknowledge him.

That therefore we may have God always before us, we ought firmly to believe, and often meditate on his existence. For the more frequently and attentively we consider the proofs of a deity, the fuller and clearer will the truth of his *Being* appear. God indeed has supplied us with variety of arguments to discover our relation to him; but without a serious and considerate reflection on them, our belief of him may be very defective; it being certain, that truths capable of demonstration, will not influence
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* Psal. 145. 26.

any man, who does not apply his thoughts to apprehend them. Our duty and interest then oblige us often to employ our time in meditations, on the many and great reasons we have to believe a God ; which is the foundation of morality and religion. And first,

Our own existence, and every thing about us, make it necessary that something should be eternal ; because mere nothing, or non-entity, could not be the cause of any thing ; wherefore, the first cause of things must be eternal. But we perceive no signs of eternity imprest on the world : What is eternal must be unchangeable, and without variation ; but this world is obnoxious to change and alteration. The tallest mountains and hardest rocks perpetually moulder and wear away, by winds, storms, and rain ; so that 'tis impossible that they should be eternal in a succession of changeable states ; for eternal and unchangeable are reciprocal terms, mutually implying and supposing each other ; and if not eternal, they must have a beginning. And as we see all things to decay, so neither do we exist and continue by any power or strength in our own nature ; but we, and all other beings had a beginning, which necessarily leads us to that one only *Being*, who gave existence to us and all others, and was itself from eternity : And what is eternal is self-existing ; because it could not receive that of another, which it always had. It is also omnipotent, there being nothing to controul or oppose it. So that this eternal *Being* must be the seat and fountain of all power, in whom all perfections center. If we survey the works of creation, view the vast system of beings in the universe, consider ourselves, or any other living creature, or even plants and vegetables ; we may from thence collect and deduce infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. If we consider the parts of our body which are innumerable,
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the variety of their size, shape, figure, and quality; that all these parts so numerous, unlike in qualities, and different in their use and employment, do yet join in, and conspire to, one end, namely the preservation of the whole body, we cannot sufficiently magnify the skill and power of him that made it. But our wonder will rise much higher, when we reflect that this artfully contrived body is united to a soul most distant from it in nature; also of parts and qualities perfectly different. Indeed, in what manner the body and soul are joined, or how a thinking mind can act on senseless matter; how the thoughts of the soul should influence the spirits of the body, and the will make it move when at rest, stop when in motion, are things beyond our conception, and not to be accounted for by philosophy. So that every one ought to say with *David*, *such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain to it. I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well* *.

And tho' the Being of God may be clearly proved from ourselves, yet we also receive full evidence thereof, from every part of the creation. For if we consider the fowls of the air, the beasts on the land, and fish in the sea; observe the amazing variety, exceeding number, and admirable structure, of each sort and kind of these creatures; we must celebrate the fruitfulness, wisdom, and goodness of providence, which gave being to so many various creatures, and finds them all food in due season. The divine existence also evidently appears from the trees of the forest, the green herbs, flowers, and fruits of the field; if we duly observe the extraordinary manner in which they grow, the exquisite art by which they are nourished from the earth, and with what just proportions of heat and moisture they

* Psal. 139. 6. 14.

they gradually advance to their ripeness and beauty. If we view the heavens, regard the number, greatness, and splendor of the stars; their regular motions, prodigious bigness, inconceivable distance from us, and the immensity of that space which things so great must possess; we cannot but readily acknowledge they are convincing arguments, and illustrious demonstrations of the infinite power and wisdom of him, who first created, still rules, and governs them. We must declare, *that the heavens were the work of his fingers; that the firmament sheweth the art of his handy work; and that he hath ordained the moon and stars.* And the wisdom of God hath so contrived and disposed his creatures, as that they afford benefit and advantage one to another. This mutual usefulness not only appears among creatures of the same species, but in almost every thing, especially that of man; the several parts of whose bodies are enabled to discharge their respective offices. The eye, heart, and hand, are not more necessary for the life of man; than the air he breaths, the water he drinks, and the food he takes, are to repair the daily decays of his nature. Meaner things are adapted to the service and benefit of those in higher rank. Plants are supplied by the earth, they yield nourishment to brute creatures that become food for men. Such a linked dependance in the methodical order of things, could only be the contrivance of an infinitely wise mind, who formed so noble a design, and effected it by proper means. A due attention to such arguments as these, will as certainly assure us of God's existence, as of ourselves; and clearly evince, that the world could not be made or supported without a *Being* of infinite perfections. And when we reflect on these things, how ought we to admire and love, adore and reverence the great creator and director of them all; *he who made the earth by his power, estab-*
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blissed the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heaven by his understanding *.

But it may be proper to examine the objection of those who pretend, that the order and exactness we see in things, proceed from the laws of motion, established in the world. We deny not, that the laws of motion are well suited to the several purposes of nature; but then the question is, who enacted these laws? It being absurd to suppose there can be laws without a law-maker; or rules, proportions and designs, without a most skilful artificer, to invent, frame, and accomplish them. The effect will ever prove the cause; harmony, order, and usefulness in the effect, will demonstrate understanding and wisdom in the cause. The giving laws to motion, is necessary to produce that beautiful, harmonious, and beneficial variety, which is in the world, and demonstrates God to be the author of it. That men degenerate into atheism then, proceeds not from want of convincing reasons to prove God's existence, but from their not allowing themselves time and leisure to weigh and estimate the force of them. And nothing so indisposes their minds from inquiring into these truths, of the greatest importance to their real happiness, as vice and immorality; it being unhappily the interest of resolutely wicked men, to wish there may be no just and righteous God, who will judge, condemn, and punish them. The more men accustom themselves calmly and impartially to look into their own nature and state, and to practise virtue and piety; the greater and more certain belief of a God will be rooted in their souls. God has left none without witnesses of his justice, goodness, and power; for any therefore to persist in stupid infidelity, their crime will be unpardonable and inexcusable. Let us then, with profound humility, *fall down before him*

* Jerem. 51. 15.

him who sitteth on the throne, and worship him for ever and ever *; who is only *worthy, to receive glory, honour, and power, for he has created all things, and for his pleasure they are and were created.*

As there is nothing will more encourage us to persevere in a religious course of life, than an endeavour to have right notions of God's nature and attributes, I shall therefore more distinctly treat of them; also rectify some mistaken notions concerning them; and then shew, what influence they ought to have on our lives and conversations. And let me first observe, that the infinity of the essence, is, as it were, the foundation and root of the divine nature, which extends itself to all God's attributes, and is necessarily implied in the notion or idea of absolute perfection; as will be evident by considering every attribute.

God is omnipresent; that is, infinite without measure or bounds. He is not confined to any space, nor excluded from any place, how secret or distant soever. God is omniscient, and knows every thing without limitation; all living creatures, inanimate beings, and every part that composes them. The deepest thoughts and most secret deeds, lie as naked and open to his view, as what is represented on the most public theatres; for light and darkness are alike to him. All that is past, all that is now doing, or shall hereafter happen, are clearly and equally manifest to him. He is omnipotent; can do every thing not implying a contradiction, or which is not inconsistent with his attributes of justice, holiness, and purity; for it is contrary to the nature of almighty power, not to have all things dependent on it. God is eternal; there being no time when he was not, nor in which he shall not be. He is immutable; not being liable to change or variation, nor exposed to the possibility of corruption

ruption or decay. His justice appears from his equal dealings with the children of men, whom he governs by laws agreeable to their nature, enforces their obedience with sufficient rewards, and never severely punishes their offences, but always on the merciful side; and makes large abatements for the weaknesses and follies, the wilfulness and obstinacy of sinners; inviting and giving them time and opportunity to reform their evil courses; tempering his justice with mercy, compassion, and patient forbearance. Holiness is also essential to God; for the immutable rectitude of his nature is such, as to will and do only what is good, he being averse to all evil. And the goodness of the Lord is so infinite; that he desireth not the death of the wicked, nor has any delight in their destruction, but would rather they should repent and live. In short, God is one compleatly perfect, uncompounded, eternal, almighty, omnipresent, necessary, immutable, incomprehensible, infinitely good, wise, just, holy, merciful, and gracious Being.

to him I shall now consider such mistaken notions of God, as are repugnant to his attributes and nature. And they must have a mean opinion of God's power, a vain one of their own, who judge prayer and other parts of divine worship unnecessary, and think they can live without his assistance; who say, *what is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?* Who imagine they can resist his power, escape his justice, harden their hearts against him, and yet hope to prosper. Some are guilty of the other extreme, and would extend the almighty power to contradictions and things impossible. Such is the doctrine of transubstantiation, which implies the same body to be bigger and less, and in many places at the same time. But could a miracle do this, it would not be of use to the Christian-religion: For Christ's

Christ's miracles were all apparently manifest to sense, but this on the contrary subverts the evidence of sense, and consequently destroys the authority and certainty of revelation. Again, *Epicurus* taught that God did not know what was done in the world, and that it would be too troublesome for him to regard it; which notion exceedingly detracted from the divine perfections. For trouble and difficulty in acting, only proceeds from limitation of knowledge and power in the agent; which cannot be supposed in an omniscient, omnipresent being, who fills heaven and earth with his glorious majesty. And when we consider the immensity of the divine presence, it is equally absurd and impious, to believe there are many Gods who govern the world. But to make God the author of sin, is the worst of all notions we can entertain of God, and most contradictory to his holiness; for he can neither do evil, nor tempt others to it, he abhors all wickedness, and is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Besides, what would more discourage a good man from praying against and opposing his sinful lusts and inclinations, than to think God the author of them? Or, what would more tempt the wicked to continue so, than to believe that all the evil they commit, is by the order and decree of God? Such mistaken opinions entirely destroy the difference between virtue and vice, take away the reasons of rewards and punishments, and tend to abolish religion and morality, out of the world. Again,

It is a great reflection on the holiness of God, to suppose we can atone his displeasure by outward austerities and penance, which have no influence on the mind and life. Who can think the wearing a coarse garment, going bare-foot in a pilgrimage or procession, or repeating every day a precise number of prayers in some particular churches, can prevail with God to put up the sword, remove plagues, or

stop earthquakes; if, notwithstanding such bodily rigours, men suffer pride, malice, cruelty, and unclean lusts to govern their hearts and corrupt their manners? Nor must we have such large conceptions of God's goodness, as will encourage men to persist in wickedness; or such severe notions of his justice, as to deter them from coming to him, to humble themselves in his presence, and beg assistance against their sins. For as the goodness of God is ever acting agreeably to his holiness, therefore it cannot approve or allow of sin, nor give hopes of pardon, but on terms of repentance. It will not conceive displeasure without just cause, nor shew favour without a dutiful submission. The divine goodness is very consistent with all that punishment, which is necessary to reclaim the wicked, and to suffer impenitent sinners to perish by the destruction of their own chusing. And tho' we have no ground to trust in the goodness of God, so long as we continue in our wickedness; yet he is ever ready to receive, encourage, and support all who are weary of their sins, and desirous to part with them. So that we ought not to represent God's justice so severe and terrible, as that notorious offenders should not hope for pardon and acceptance, on their penitential return to him. How false then are those doctrines which give men no hopes to obtain that salvation, which Christ brought down from heaven; and make them despair of that mercy and compassion, which he hath most solemnly promised? As therefore we may conclude, God will be offended and withdraw his grace, if we neglect and despise him; so we may be assured, that he will never be angry without reason, nor beyond measure, but that his corrections will be allayed with mercy. And as his justice, purity, and wisdom will not patiently behold us profaning his holy name, wronging our neighbours, or defiling our
souls

souls with lusts ; so if we unfeignedly repent, heartily love, and humbly adore him ; he will forgive our trespasses, and readily do us good ; he will comfort and carry us thro' troubles, and satisfy all our pious, reasonable desires.

Lastly, The consideration of God's most perfect nature, and our great obligations to him, should inspire us with a just sense of our duty towards him. To know God is the most desirable and best knowledge, and to perform our duty agreeably to the knowledge we have of his nature, will vastly tend to our own advantage. If we conform our lives to his will and pleasure, this will replenish our hearts with peace and joy. It will yield us the highest satisfaction, follow us to the other world, and be a great part of our happiness there. *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent **. The way to eternal life is to believe the existence of God, to acknowledge his absolute dominion, to obey all his express commands, or such as naturally follow from his attributes. If we have the divine perfections always in view ; it will oblige us to be strictly careful and exact how we behave ourselves. We shall then be cautious to avoid the appearance of sin, lest we should be surprized and betrayed into evil. If we set the Lord always before us, and let our souls wait on him ; the meditation of his attributes will powerfully influence and sway us, in things of the greatest moment.

His holiness will raise in our minds a hatred of insincerity, cause us to abhor carnal lusts, and to refrain from impure licentious conversation. His justice will convince us that we are not treated worse than we deserve, and that we ought quietly to bear the troubles and afflictions of this life ; it will make us to moderate and abate our affections to

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* John 17. 3.

this world, and excite us to greater diligence and earnestness to seek that treasure above, which no enemy can take from us, no time consume or impair. His omnipresence will banish profaneness, vanity, and debauchery; it will engage us to gravity and sobriety in our deportment; decency, reverence and humility in our public and private devotions. The thought of his almighty power will make us fear to offend him who is our supreme Lord, and can destroy both body and soul in hell. The infinite goodness of God will oblige us with the deepest affection and highest gratitude, to love and praise him for our excellent nature, and his great kindness in daily preserving us; and make us perpetually to rely on his providence, entirely to depend on his bounty for temporal blessings, and for his future favour and mercy. Meditations on God's unbounded goodness, will incline us to do good to our fellow-creatures; to relieve the wants and miseries of our poor distressed neighbours. Trust in his goodness will possess our souls with sedateness and tranquillity in the worst of times, dispose us to use our enemies well, to treat with generosity those whom the vicissitude of things have made unfortunate; and it will give us courage in the midst of danger, inspire our hearts with resolution and firmness against death itself.

And as there is nothing so embitters the pleasures of life, as the apprehensions of death; so nothing can make the thoughts of dying, easy and tolerable, but the fixing our love on God, and the practice of true religion and virtue. The approaches of death will not be dreadful to that man, who with diligence and constancy has endeavoured to procure the salvation of his soul. How pleasant and refreshing must the first appearances of the bright celestial world above be to him, who all his life long has been contemplating on it? How desirable, and inexpressibly delightful will be his admission into the presence

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presence of almighty God, whose nature he has studied to know; and whose will he has laboured to observe; whose divine perfections, so far as possible, he has zealously strove to imitate! He who has thus lived, (and which the wicked will wish they had done when they come to die) must be easy, serene and joyful at his departure hence, which will open so large and bright a region of glory for his soul to enter and dwell in for ever. I shall conclude all in the wise man's words; *The fear of the Lord is honour, glory, gladness, and a crown of rejoicing. The fear of the Lord maketh a merry heart, giveth joy, gladness, and long life. Whoso feareth the Lord, it shall go well with him at the last, and he shall find favour in the day of death**.

DISCOURSE L. Bp. Moor.

Godliness, or true religion, the design of Christianity.

1 Tim. 6. 3.

— *If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the doctrine which is according to godliness.*

WHEN we consider there never was any religion in the world, which did so earnestly recommend and strictly enjoin the practice of virtue and piety, as the Christian, and yet that so little of it

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appears

* Ecclesi. 1. 11. 12. 13.

appears in the lives of Christians ; we must either suppose some defect in the religion, or great fault in its professors ; either Christianity does not prescribe and afford sufficient means, for the attainment of true holiness, or else they who profess it do neglect the means it recommends, to make us holy here, and happy hereafter. But certain it is, that God and religion have not been wanting to men, tho' they are to themselves : There being nothing required in our religion, as a duty and necessary condition of our happiness, but what every man may perform by God's grace, and which if he sincerely prays for, he may obtain. ' Therefore if men will not make use of that grace, which God so plentifully gives to all, it is but fit and equal (saith *Cryso- stom*) that they impute their defects to themselves.' Indeed few have had the boldness directly to charge their vices upon God, as if he denied them power and opportunities to act better. But the common way is, for men to frame such a model of religion, as may suit with a vicious life, and quiet the complaints of an uneasy conscience.

Thus some will justify a wicked life, by denying the difference between good and evil ; and others excuse it, by pretending all their actions are under a fatal decree, and come necessarily to pass. Some make obedience to God's laws needless, by disowning his providence and care of the world ; others would exempt themselves from the practice of piety and virtue, by fancying their religion to consist only in true believing ; whilst others place it in outward shew and ceremony. Some again hope they may enjoy the brutish pleasures of this life, and the pure ones of the next, and carry their sins with them to heaven, by so exalting and extending God's mercy, unto obstinate and impenitent sinners, as to deny both his justice and truth ; whilst others call in question
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the resurrection of the dead, and the rewards of another life.

Since then, there are so many dangerous rocks on which we may split, the great question will be, by what compass we are to steer? And the best way to solve this doubt, will be to propose and recommend to our serious consideration, St. Paul's rule, by which we may effectually discover useful Christian doctrines, from false and hurtful ones; namely, they must be *according to godliness* †. What gave occasion for St. Paul to lay down this rule, was the several errors contrary to the doctrine of Christ, which in his days had crept into the church; all which he reproves, because they were not according to godliness. *If any man* (says he) *teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself**: So dangerous a thing it is for a Christian, to busy himself more about contentious disputes, than the practice of an holy life; to study questions that may betray him into wrath and envy, which will shut men out of the kingdom of heaven; a place that cannot be obtained, but by the continual exercise of *godliness*.

The design of this discourse, will be to prove, that true religion or godliness, is a fixed, certain thing, not variable, according to places, times, or mens humours; but the reasons of it are eternal and unchangeable. — That the end of the gospel doctrines is to advance and recommend the practice of piety and virtue, to mankind. — That it is an argument of the truth and excellency of the Christian religion,

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that

† 1 Tim. 6. 3. * 3, 4, 5.

that all its doctrines are conformable to godliness.— That whatever doctrines are not according to godliness, so far from being necessary, they cannot be true.

St. *Paul* requires, that every man should consent to the doctrine which is according to godliness. His meaning is, that godliness must be the standard and measure, by which we must judge of doctrines. If a doctrine is according to godliness, we are to assent to it; if not, to dissent from it. Therefore all men must have one certain, invariable notion of godliness, in order to know what doctrine to embrace, or reject. This is also evident, from the notion of godliness itself; which signifies our being like God, and copying out in our minds and manners, all the perfections of the divine nature, so far as we are capable. And since those qualities and perfections in God, are eternal and unchangeable, so must our notions of God be. Indeed godliness, in a strict sense, imports no more than the worship of God; but as it is here used by the apostle, it comprehends all moral virtues; and includes, not only acts of religion towards God, but of righteousness towards our neighbour, and of sobriety with respect to ourselves. In a word, it is behaving suitably to that nature and reason, which God has given us, and for his sake. So that godliness or religion, is no arbitrary thing; but must be as eternal and immutable, as the nature of mankind, or rather as God is, who contrived that nature.

We may talk what we please, of the indifference of good and evil; but the more we think, the more we shall be convinced, that there is an eternal goodness and evil in things, morally considered. Some actions perfectly agree with God's holy nature, others do not; and if his nature is eternal and unchangeable, then will those things which agree with

with it, be eternally good ; and those which vary from it, be eternally evil. Thus, for instance ; as to love and honour God, are acts most agreeable to his perfect nature, so it will eternally be the duty of his creatures to perform this to him : It being absurd to suppose God would command his creatures to hate him, or to act contrary to the rectitude of his nature. Besides, there are such eternal respects and relations between things, that some actions will be ever good, and others evil. We cannot suppose a benefactor, but we must acknowledge that gratitude and thanks are his due ; we cannot but allow, that an innocent person ought to receive no injury or hurt. How unreasonable then is that opinion, which makes the civil law of the magistrate, the only measure of good and evil ? For should the magistrate inhibit our addresses to almighty God, would therefore the service of God be evil ? Or, should he command me to kill my father, would that make parricide lawful ? So that it is evident, there are actions antecedently good, to the laws of the magistrate, and duties which are not alterable by him. They (says *Justin Martyr*) are very acceptable to God, who do those things, which are in their own nature universally and eternally good.'

As to the gospel doctrines, the design of them is to advance and recommend godliness, or true religion, to the practice of mankind. What was said of the *Lacedæmonian* laws, might with much greater truth be applied to Christ's doctrines ; ' That it is the property of them all, to inflame men's minds with the love of virtue, and to create a contempt of empty, sensual pleasures.' To this end, all the precepts of our Lord, his great actions, and grievous sufferings, were directed. But the better to illustrate and prove this point, let us duly regard the following considerations. ' That none of our Saviour's sermons or discourses, were on subjects purely speculative.

culative. By his sermons he taught men to be humble, meek, pure and peaceable; to bear reviling language patiently, and to submit willingly to persecution for righteousness sake; to put hypocrisy out of countenance, and to reform such notions in religion, as were impediments to real piety, and tended to encourage a wicked life. This method was also carefully observed, by his apostles and those who were joined with them, to plant his religion. — ‘That the revelation which God has made of himself in scripture is such, as most conduces to promote godliness, to excite our endeavours to attain those qualifications, which commonly fit us for the kingdom of heaven, and are the necessary terms of our salvation. For God is there represented, as just and righteous in all his works, pure and holy in all his ways; as the rewarder only of them, who love and fear him, and keep his commandments. He is there pleased to ascribe unto himself, the passions of men; such as love, hatred, anger, revenge, hope, grief and repentance; not that these passions are properly in God, who is wholly free from the imperfections which cause them in us, but meerly in condescension to the weakness of our nature, and to help our slow understandings; to the intent, that what is there declared to be the object of God’s love and hatred, his grief or anger, might be the proper object of ours, and more strongly affect us. These passions are in scripture attributed to God, to encourage virtue, and discountenance vice. So that the description which revelation gives us of God, is accommodated and tends to the promotion and advancement of godliness. As this seems to be the only reason why God has revealed so much of his divine nature, and requires that we should profoundly reverence, sincerely love him, and religiously conform to his righteous will; so if we neglect to answer the ends of
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this revelation, God will declare at the day of judgment, that he knows us not, because we *kept not his commandments.*

Knowledge and practice, in a christian sense, are but two terms importing the same thing. For as they who keep not the commandments, cannot, in scripture sense, pretend to know God; so neither at the day of judgment, will Christ know them, who lived in disobedience to the great laws of his religion, and neglected the chief instances of their duty. Whoever searches after knowledge, only to gratify a vain curiosity, or qualify himself to be an able disputant in religion, does but deceive himself; for all our knowledge will avail us nothing, unless it influences our practice, and tends to reform our manners. In this state then of imperfection and tryal of our obedience, we need enquire no further after God's essence, and the mysteries of his incomprehensive nature, than may serve to instruct us, in such instances and cases, as we ought to imitate him in. Indeed hereafter we shall see God as he is, and all the glories of his divinity. Then we shall stand in the company of the whole church triumphant, of all the saints and angels, round the throne, and forever behold, admire and adore, the infinite wisdom, goodness and power of God; and with the highest transports of love and joy, shall, to all eternity, bless, praise and magnify the Son of God, and our redeemer, by whose powerful mediation, we are admitted into God's presence.

In truth there is no fundamental doctrine of Christianity, but what in some instance or other, naturally tends to promote a good life. If the doctrine be, that God is the maker of heaven and earth, are not his creatures from thence obliged to gratitude and praise? If it be, that God is the great sovereign of the world; does not a duty hence plainly

follow, that we his subjects are to obey his laws? Does not the doctrine of his infinite goodness, make it our duty to love and imitate him; and that of his irresistible power, to submit ourselves to his pleasure, and dread to offend him? Does not his truth, which is one of his essential attributes, make it our duty to believe in him, and depend on his promises? And his unsearchable wisdom oblige us to surrender our wills to his, and leave the events of things to his wise disposal? Does not the belief of his omnipresence, and all-seeing eye, engage us to have a constant, awful regard of him, and to walk circumspectly in all our ways? The doctrine of God's providence, which is extended to the smallest, as well as most weighty affairs; what powerful motives does it afford us against dejection, and immoderate care? The doctrine, that all things work together for good to the faithful servants of God; what a mighty obligation does it lay on us, to be contented and easy in our present condition, however attended with adversity and afflictions; and to take no indirect, unlawful methods, to get out of it? The doctrine, that God has an absolute power over our souls, to save or destroy them; plainly implies, we are to dread God more than man, and to disobey man rather than God? The doctrine of the necessity of Christ's sufferings and passion; does it not make it our indispensable duty, to mortify the flesh, and crucify the lusts thereof; and *rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, for a season?* And should not the doctrine of his resurrection and ascension, carry our thoughts and designs into the other world, and fix our hearts and affections on the treasure which is in heaven? Lastly, does not the doctrine of a day of judgment, in which sentence shall pass on all men, for every thought, word, and deed; oblige us, if we love ourselves, and desire our eter-

nal welfare, to put our accounts in exact order, and break off our sins by a timely, sincere repentance. *Seeing all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?* If we believe these christian doctrines, our lives must agree with our principles, and our faith be rendered effectual, by the holiness of our conversation. *Every man that hath this hope, will purify himself, even as God is pure.* That is, if we hope to see God, we must endeavour to imitate his purity; if we receive the doctrine of Christ Jesus, let not our behaviour be unsuitable thereto, but be mindful to observe whatever he hath commanded.

But perhaps some will object, that one great doctrine of our religion, the mystery of the holy trinity, does not at all concern a holy life. Indeed, this may seem so, to them who slightly examine things; but whoever with exactness considers this doctrine will be otherwise persuaded. For when we reflect that God so loved the world, as to send his only begotten Son, to save those who believe in him; does not this the most strictly oblige us to make him all possible returns of praise and love, gratitude and obedience? When we consider that God would not pardon sin, without an ample satisfaction, even the blood and life of his own son; can there be any arguments more effectual, to deter us from sin, and make an ingenuous mind abhor the thoughts of it? When we consider, that this Son of God, who was the brightness of his father's glory, and the express image of his person; is now entered into the holy of holies, as our high priest, daily to offer up prayers to God, and intercede with him on our behalf; will not this create in us, a mighty confidence to address ourselves to the throne of heaven in all our wants, and give us strong hopes, that God will not forsake us, in our greatest distress?

strefs? When we consider, that the holy spirit vouchsafes to dwell in the temples of our bodies ; does not this deeply engage us, to prepare our bodies for his reception, by purity and temperance, lest we grieve this guest, and cause him to desert us ? Thus have I clearly demonstrated, that the design of the gospel is to promote godliness or true religion, and that there is a direct tendency in all its doctrines, to enforce the practice of it upon Christians.

And it is an argument of the truth and excellency of the Christian religion, that its doctrines are according to religion and godliness ; which also imports the great duties of natural religion. For what duty is there in natural religion, but in the Christian law, is more clearly propounded, more fully explained, more strongly confirmed ? And what argument so cogent, in favour of any religious truths, as their being consonant and agreeable to the common sentiments of mankind ? or what more manifest proof of the excellency of the gospel precepts, than their harmony with the laws of nature ? The most material objections that can be made against any instituted religion, are, that its principles contradict clear reason, or its duties are repugnant to natural laws ; since what contradicts right reason, and is contrary to the law of nature, cannot be true. And it must be granted, that natural religion is the foundation on which all revealed religion stands ; because from natural light the existence of God is proved, it being what revealed religion always supposes. But in the Christian religion, there is nothing commanded, but what becomes the perfection of the divine nature, agrees with those eternal laws which flow from it, and suits the native principles of our own souls, and our truest interests. It propounds no point of faith, but what we have sufficient reason to believe ; exacts no duty but we have exceeding motives to perform it. We

may find the great duties of our religion all writ on our own nature; nor will any thing contribute so much towards the perfecting our natural capacities, as a life conformable to the laws of religion. For as religion was designed to advance our nature, and make us more nearly resemble God; so profaneness and irreligion set us at the greatest distance from him. And was the contrary of every Christian law enacted; for instance, instead of forgiving enemies, and shewing mercy to the distressed, we were commanded to revenge every little injury, to be implacably malicious, and even to extremity cruel; mankind would be changed into a race of wolves and tygers, or become a new order of devils incarnate? or, suppose we were enjoined to be false to our words, unjust in our dealings, treacherous to our trust; would it not dissolve all civil society, and destroy all commerce? nay, it would make the world a great den of thieves and robbers. Again, was it required of us, to eat always to gluttony, and drink to excess; would not our obedience thereto, ruin our health, destroy our rational faculties, and transform the children of men, into a herd of swine? So little reason then have we to complain, that the commandments of God are either difficult or grievous; but much cause to bless him, for ruling the world by such righteous laws; for giving us a religion, which our own faculties assure us, (and in all other cases we can trust and rely on them) is most reasonable and excellent; as being perfective of our nature, and worthy the wisdom of God who revealed it; as being framed with great condescension to the infirmities of man, and every way suitable to the attributes of God.

Lastly, whatever doctrines are not according to godliness, are so far from being necessary, that they cannot be true. This is evident from what has been already observed. I shall briefly reflect on
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some few of the many opinions, which, on examination, will appear not to be according to godliness, or true religion. As first, that God is the author of sin. But this cannot possibly be true, it being inconsistent with the reason of mankind, and manifestly repugnant to the attributes of God. That God should be the author of sin, of what offends and dishonours him, is absurd and most unreasonable ; it being what he has so often and solemnly declared he abhors and detests : it contradicts the attribute of his truth ; he having most severely threatened to punish it, and is contrary both to infinite goodness and justice ; such oppositions depriving God of the holiness essential to his nature. Again, The doctrine of irreversible decrees cannot be according to godliness, because it takes away the strongest motives to a religious life. For if a man is included within the decree of election, the greatest sins will not damn him ; and if he is excluded, the most holy life cannot possibly save him. Besides, if God decrees to save or destroy reprobate men, without regard had, to their good or evil lives, then they may be saved, without respect to either ; for what God has decreed will certainly come to pass : But to sentence men to heaven or hell, without any consideration of their faith and obedience, or infidelity and impenitence, is to make a day of judgment unnecessary, and directly contrary to that justice, by which God has declared, he will then proceed. *For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Lastly, another doctrine to be condemned, is that which recommends the use of such means for promoting the Christian religion, as are destructive of the ends of it. The end of the Christian religion, is to make men

men sincere, true to their word, and upright in their dealings ; therefore they, who by lying, and equivocation, endeavour to propagate the religion of Christ, do by such means subvert the end they pretend to serve. The design of christianity is to render men harmless, kind and charitable one to another ; therefore they who condemn men's bodies to the stake, in order to refine their minds, and cut their throats to save their souls, instead of serving Christ's religion, they bring upon it the utmost slander and disgrace. For we must not do evil that good may come of it ; we may not use unlawful means, to obtain an honest end.

But if so many errors in faith, so many vices in practice prevail, contrary to the doctrine of godliness, what guide shall we take, what method use, to rectify our judgments and recover our virtue ; to remove and avert the evils and calamities we need to fear and dread ? To this it may be answered, that we must search in our own breasts for the causes and cures of our miseries, where they are and may be found. When a long custom of sinning takes from men the sense of guilt ; when they are so deeply enslaved to their lusts, as to love the fetters that confine them ; when the distemper has so far prevailed, that the patient no longer desires a recovery ; then all hopes will cease unless a speedy remedy be applied. This remedy every man, by the grace of God, has in his own power ; I mean by repentance to turn from his evil ways, and without delay make haste to keep God's commandments : This is the only course he can take to save himself. Let us then zealously endeavour to approve ourselves to God, by a conscientious performance of those conditions, which are plainly required to make a man a true christian. If instead of censuring or misrepresenting the designs and actions of our governors, which we seldom fully know, and often mistake ;
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whereby their affections are estranged from the people; and the just reverence which is due to them is lost or abated, every man would do his part to promote peace and virtue. If instead of inventing names to distinguish men by parties, narrowly observing the faults of others, and representing them in the worst light; we would strive to correct our own failings, and live strict to our professions. If instead of vilifying and abusing one another, by which, infinite scandal is cast on the Christian religion, we would take a true and faithful survey of our condition; heartily beg the pardon of God and our neighbour, for all the injuries we have done to both; humbly implore God's grace, that for the future, our faith may be sound, and our manners pure: These changes would prove the best expedients for us to live in peace and love, respect and good will, with mutual trust and confidence; and will be the only method to live happy and prosperous.

How often has God in a fatherly way admonished us, that he might not smite us? slightly wounded us, that we might avoid the fatal strokes of his justice? how often gently chastised us, that we might escape his terrible judgments: And shall none of the various methods God uses, produce in us a real change and amendment? If neither his clemency will invite us to consider, nor his severity awaken us out of our ungrounded security, it must at last prove fatal to us. Let then the danger of offending God persuade us; the multitude of the divine mercies allure us; the secret motions of his Holy Spirit excite us, to seek the Lord while he may be found, before the acceptable time passeth away, and his injured, long abused patience is changed into implacable fury. May the care of our souls, which will everlastingly perish, if we do not truly repent, prevail on us to return unto God and our duty; to take up speedy, firm and steady
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resolutions to conform our wills in all things unto God's; to govern our thoughts and actions by the laws and example of our blessed Saviour; to subdue every lust and unruly passion; and to make us sincerely resolve and purpose, never more to offend and dishonour the great God that made us. Then shall we live according to godliness and true religion, and perfectly answer the end and design of Christianity.

DISCOURSE LI. Abp. Synge.

Eternal salvation, the end and design of religion.

Mat. 19. 16.

What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life.

AS the only end and design that every man ought to propose to himself in his religion, is the attainment of everlasting life, or eternal salvation; the young man in the gospel is therefore highly to be commended for his enquiry, who said unto our Saviour, *What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* At the time of our Saviour's being upon earth, the Jewish church was divided into two grand parties, the *Pharisees* and *Sadduces*; and from the circumstances of the history, it seems probable, that this young man was a *Pharisee*. However he does not desire to be instructed

fructed how he might dispute with learning and subtilty, on the several controversies that were then very commonly debated ; or how he might convince or refute the opposite party, was he to engage in disputation with them ; but his salvation was what he only regarded, nor did he seem to value any thing that did not conduce thereto. And therefore coming to our blessed Lord, as to a guide in religion, he thought every necessary question was comprehended in this one, *What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ?* And thus the jailor at *Philippi*, who being fully convinced by the miraculous earthquake, which shook the foundations, and opened the doors of the prison, that *Paul* and *Silas* were the true servants and messengers of God ; was satisfied with putting only one such question as this, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?* For the better confirmation of this point, that the end of all religion is man's eternal salvation, it may be necessary to have recourse to the following consideration.

That this is the main end and grand motive which God himself proposes to us. What he is pleased to recommend as the end and design of our embracing religion, we ought to receive and entertain as such. Let us then examine the holy scriptures, and there enquire with what view and intention our Saviour came to teach religion, and for what reason we are required to embrace it. And since mankind, partly by their original corruption, and more especially by their actual transgressions, were become *children of wrath*, and unqualified to obtain that eternal salvation for which they were at first created ; therefore the very business of our Saviour's coming into the world, was *to save those that were lost*, to reclaim and shew them the way of salvation. When he sent his apostles abroad to preach the

the gospel, this was the only motive he used to induce men to receive it: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned* †. And to the same purpose he tells us, *that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* And in the prayer which he made to his heavenly father, he has left it on record for our support and comfort, that he had power to give eternal life to as many as God had given him *. Again.

The prospect of eternal salvation, is the only thing that can sufficiently encourage and support a good man, under all the difficulties, to which a religious course of life does often expose him in this world. In every work which a prudent man undertakes, the end he proposes to himself ought always to counter-balance whatever trouble or difficulty may reasonably be expected therein. And certain it is, that in the strict profession and practice of religion, there are many difficulties and hardships very often to be encountered. We must strive and struggle with our unruly lusts and passions, arm ourselves against all the alluring temptations of the world and wicked men; we must despise threatened dangers, and with patience bear the evils that will sometimes attend us, in doing our duty; we must continually watch and be upon our guard against the assaults and devices of Satan, and be ready to lay down even life itself, should God call us to it, for the sake of our duty and a good conscience. And what view, prospect, or consideration is there to support a man's mind, to bear him up with courage against things so uneasy, and some of them even terrible to nature? Honour and credit, wealth and prosperity, are indeed sometimes in this world, a part of the reward of virtue and piety; but these

† Mark 16. 16. * John 3. 16. John 17. 2.

these are very uncertain, on this side the grave ; or were they otherwise, yet how can any temporal thing be a sufficient motive for any man to lay down his life, even in the best cause, when he knows that death will wholly deprive him of his offered reward ? but if once we are strongly possessed with this truth, that there really is such a thing as eternal happiness, to obtain which, religion is the only sure way ; this will make us despise all difficulties in our passage to it. Let troubles and persecutions fall ever so heavy, yet if it be for the sake of God and a good conscience, we may be comforted with this, *that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* †. And if we keep close to our duty, even under the greatest hardships and trials that can befall us, we may reckon with St. Paul, *That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed in us* *.

From these two considerations it fully appears, that eternal salvation is the only end and design, that a man ought to propose to himself in religion ; because this is the very end God recommends to us, and the only considerations, that can effectually support us, under all the hardships and difficulties, which our duty requires us to bear and encounter. And indeed, the truth of this observation is so very certain and evident, that no man who has any sense of religion, will dare to deny it. For ask a protestant, papist, or any man who professes to serve and fear God, for what end he so does ; and he will answer, because he hopes to be thereby everlastingly saved. Again, ask him whether he would continue in the profession he is of, did he not believe he shall be saved in and by it ; and he will readily say, he would not : both which are plain acknowledgments, that the only end every man proposes in his religion, is his ever-

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† 2 Cor. 4. 17. * Rom. 8. 18.

lasting salvation ; which was the observation I first made, and from whence several inferences of great moment and importance may be drawn. And

We may from hence learn, what is the design of all religious actions that are to be performed by us, either to God, our neighbour, or ourselves. Those which immediately respect God, are prayer, praise, and receiving the holy communion ; those which relate to our neighbour, are justice, truth, mercy and charity ; and such as concern ourselves, are temperance, patience, mortification and self-denial. For every thing done on a principle of obedience to God's command, may be truly called a religious action ; and the only reason or motive to the performing such action is, that the same is pleasing to God, and which he will reward in the next life. And therefore, as the whole of religion consists in the performance of religious actions, and that the end and design of all religion, is to obtain mens eternal salvation ; it necessarily follows, that this is what ought to be the end and design of every particular religious action. But some may object, that God proposes to us the welfare and prosperity of this world, as a certain, or at least probable reward of true piety ; agreeably to what the wise man says, *length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour ; her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace* *. And St. Paul also tells us, *that godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come* †. In answer to this I admit, that whatever God has thought fit to propose or promise, as a reward for our good actions, so far, but no farther, we may have a view or respect thereunto. But tho' he sometimes sets before us the good things of this world, as a reward of virtue, yet not with a design to make any of them the

* Prov. 3. 16, 17. † 1 Tim. 4. 8.

the end of a virtuous action; but only a means, the more effectually to pursue that great end of our salvation, which should be ever present to us. For however good an action may be in itself, yet if we only consider the temporal reward attending it, and not refer to a farther and better end, such action can never be pleasing and acceptable unto God. For example; honour or praise in the sight of men, is part of temporal encouragement, which God has been pleased to propose to religion; Thus *our light should so shine before men, that they seeing our good works may glorify God*, and promote the salvation of ourselves and others: and yet our blessed Saviour calls the Pharisees *hypocrites*, for making this the end of their good actions, namely, *to be seen of men*, and assures them, they are to expect no farther reward from God. Indeed to encourage our weakness, God is pleased to allure us with a prospect, even of temporal things; but that we should not set our hearts on such trifles, we are often reminded, how little we ought to regard them, in comparison of things eternal. *The kingdom of God and his righteousness are first to be sought.* We must not labour for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life †. This is the one thing needful, that treasure, and godly pearl, for the purchase of which a man should be ready to part with all he hath. Again,

From what has been said, it will follow, that when any one attempts to bring another over to the true religion, his only design should be, to promote and set forward his neighbour's salvation. The Pharisees compassed sea and land to make one proselyte to their religion, but so far from helping him in the way to heaven, they make him *twofold more the child of hell than themselves* *. And the method

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† Mat. 6. 3. John 6. 27. Luk. 10. 42. Mat. 13. 44.

* Mat. 23. 15.

many have taken to make converts, or rather hypocrites, evidently proves, that their design has been more to advance and encrease a party in this world, than to save the souls of men in the next. But if we are in conscience obliged to love our neighbour with the same sincerity, tho' not degree of affection, that we love ourselves; then as our everlasting happiness is, or ought to be the only great end and design of our own religion, so should we have the same in view, when we endeavour to *convert another from the error of his ways* *. And this truth being once admitted, the consequence will be, that whoever argues or disputes in defence of religion, ought to do it with all possible calmness and gentleness. Sharpness, anger, heat and violence, generally raise mens passions, obstruct their reason, and render them less capable to receive clear and solid conviction: But a meek and calm management of religious disputes, as it is a great argument of charity, and of a true christian concern for the souls of men, so it very much tends to make an adversary patient and attentive, to what is offered; and rightly disposes him to receive every truth, that appears necessary or useful to promote his salvation. And therefore all persons, on such occasions, should have St. Paul's words deeply impressed on their hearts, *that the servants of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth* †. Thus did Christ Jesus, the Son of God, both teach and preach the gospel when on earth. Tho' he sometimes rebuked with sharpness the abominable wickedness and hypocrisy, of the hard hearted Pharisees, yet he always did it with the greatest gravity and seriousness. But in all other his public sermons and private discourses,

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* Jam. 5. 19. † 2 Tim. 2. 24. 25.

we find his most rational and holy doctrine delivered with all imaginable temper and sweetness. And indeed the mighty progress that Christianity soon after made in the world, was in a great measure owing to the same way of teaching, which the apostles and first preachers used. But in process of time, when men began to intermix their passions with religion, and this weakness of nature too powerfully prevailed on many, who defended the truth; the consequence was, that men took delight to oppose one another, and often mistook each other's meaning; whereby the Christian church came to be so rent and divided into sects and parties, as without an extraordinary interposition of Almighty God, we have little hopes of seeing it ever restored to that union, it once so happily enjoyed.

And from what has been said, it also clearly follows, that nothing ought to be received as *part* of religion, but what is *necessary* to salvation. This inference will better appear true, by distinguishing between a *part*, and *circumstance* of religion. Whatever is taken into the body of religion, as of a perpetual and unchangeable nature, may be called *part* of it; but a thing that by law or custom, is only joined with any religious performance, and which may, by any authority less than God's, be changed and separated; such thing, whatever it be, is no *part* but only a *circumstance* of religion.—I would illustrate this, by a similitude taken from a man and his garments. The vitals, and every limb of a man's body, are part of him; take away his vitals, and you destroy his being, or lop a limb, and you lame or maim him; or was it possible to add a limb, you make him a monster: But as for his clothes, they may be altered and changed, without injury to him. And thus, to love and fear, worship and serve God; to be just, true, peaceable, humble, charitable. sober and tem-

Disc. LI. *the end and design of religion.* 363

perate; to be received into the church by baptism, and after that frequently to partake of the holy communion of Christ's body and blood; such things as these, which the law of God requires, are always to be considered, as *parts* of religion, perpetual and unalterable. But the particular hour when a congregation should meet to worship God; the place where they should assemble; the particular form of words, in which they should offer up their devotions; and the posture of body, to be observed on that occasion: such like things as these, being appointed and settled for the sake of decency and order, are subject to change and alteration by the same human authority that appointed them, when just reason offers; and therefore are to be regarded in themselves, not as *parts*, but modes and *circumstances* of religion, or as the dress and garb of it.

This distinction being premised, the truth of my inference will not require much proof. For since the end and design of every part of a thing, ought to be the same with the whole; and the true intent of religion being, or should be, eternal salvation; it follows, that whatever is unnecessary, or does not tend to this end, ought not to be received as a *part* of religion. On this principle so established, we may very justly reject a great many of those inventions which the church of *Rome* has introduced and would impose on others. That church has adopted into the very body of religion, and as *parts* of it, sundry things, that were never delivered by Christ or his apostles; such as praying to saints, worshipping of images, transubstantiation, worshipping of the host, the sacrifice of the mass, purgatory, prayers and masses for the dead, the pope's supremacy, and their church's infallibility. These particulars they teach and practice, as being perpetual, and to be ever kept up in the Christian church; and are with them *parts* of religion. Tho' we can by many

convincing arguments prove many of these things false, others unlawful and wicked; yet it is sufficient for us to reject them, had we no other reason for it than because they would impose them on us, as *parts* of the Christian religion. For as nothing is to be received as *part* of religion, but what is necessary to salvation, so all these things, even supposing them lawful, which they are not, are manifestly unnecessary in order to this end. Since nothing can be necessary to salvation, but what God has commanded; whose commands are either expressly, or by consequence, contained in the holy scriptures. And if we search *them* from the beginning to the end, so far from suggesting any the least of these things, as commanded by God; that on the contrary, they are wholly silent therein, except as to some of them, which are particularly forbidden. So that had we no more to say against these innovations of the *Roman* church, as in truth we have a great deal, yet this would be enough for us to reject them, namely, that they would force them on us, as *parts* of religion, when they manifestly are not necessary to salvation.

And it should be observed, that those who dissent from our church, endeavour to turn this argument against us; alledging, that they have the same reason to refuse the cross at baptism, kneeling at the holy communion, wearing a surplice, using the ring in matrimony, and the rest of our ceremonies; because it is confessed on both sides, that these things are in their nature indifferent, and tho' not forbidden by God, yet are no way made necessary, by any command or appointment of his. But the insufficiency of this argument will easily appear, when we consider, that our church does not impose her ceremonies, as *part*, but only as *circumstances* of religion; and who declares, that they are in their nature

nature alterable, by the same authority that impose them †. And tho' it is certainly true, that we ought not to receive any thing as *part* of religion, if it be not necessary to salvation, yet it does not follow from thence, but that lawful authority may in many cases, for the sake of order, and to avoid confusion, prescribe and determine the modes and *circumstances*; which are things very different from the *parts* of religion, and that we ought to obey and conform to such determination.

The last inference I shall make, is, that all questions and disputes concerning such things, as are not necessary to salvation, ought as much as possible, to be avoided, and excluded from religion. Alas! what vast and numberless volumes of religious controversies, have been published, to disturb and distract the world? But did such writers seriously enquire, previous thereto, whether every point they handled was necessary to salvation, both the number and bulk of such books, would have been reduced to a very narrow compass. Indeed would learned men, soberly and peaceably debate, even such points as are not perhaps of any great necessity, without giving disturbance to others, they are not at all to be blamed; but if the only design of religion and every *part* of it, be nothing else but the salvation of man, whatever questions or disputations tend not to this end, ought not to be intermixed therewith. Let us then remember the advice of St. Paul, to *avoid foolish questions, genealogies, contentions and strivings*, because *they are unprofitable and vain**. That is, they no way promote our salvation, which is the only true end of religion: Also, *to flee youthful lusts; to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart* ‡. But *foolish and unlearned* questions;

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† Art. 34. Preface to the book of common prayer.

* Titus 3. 9. ‡ 2. 22, 23,

questions avoid, knowing that they gender to strife.

The Devil, in order to hinder us in our Christian course, not only lays the temptations of pleasure and profit in our way ; but also endeavours to raise our vain curiosity, by starting a number of subtil, useless questions : and whilst our minds are too much busied about these trifles, we neglect true faith, piety, charity, and other things, that are of absolute necessity, to the making of our calling and election sure. I shall conclude in the words of the same apostle, with a little variation. *Forgetting those things which are unnecessary, and reaching forth unto those things which are necessary, let us press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* To which prize, God of his infinite mercy bring us all, &c.

PRAYERS.

P R A Y E R S.

A preparatory prayer.

O Lord, prepare our hearts and minds, that we may offer up our prayers and praises agreeably to thy will. Raise in us great and worthy thoughts of thy divine majesty; help our infirmities, and accept of these our imperfect services, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A prayer for morning or evening, for a person in private.

Confession.

O Most gracious and merciful Lord God, look down with pity and compassion on me thy unworthy servant, who in all humility confess myself a wretched, sinful creature. I acknowledge, O God; my sins of pride and vain glory, envy and hatred; my wicked desires and vain thoughts, my idle words and evil actions*. I truly repent of, and am heartily sorry for these and all other my manifold sins and great wickedness, which I have committed against thy divine majesty. Have mercy upon me, O God, and for the merits of thy son Jesus Christ, pardon my offences; forgive, I pray thee, all the sins of my age and youth, of my soul and body; my secret and private, my presumptuous and deliberate sins; those I know, or which I cannot remember. O Lord, forgive all and every of my offences, and be graciously pleased to be reconciled to me, thro' the son of thy love, who is our advocate with thee, and the propitiation for all

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* Here recollect them.

our sins; and according to thy mercy, pardon and spare me, thro' his merits and gracious intercession. *Amen.*

A prayer for the grace of God's Holy Spirit.

ALmighty God, who hast promised thy Holy Spirit to them who ask it. Grant, I beseech thee, that he may constantly be with me, to assist and support me in all trials and temptations. Let him be to me a spirit of sanctification to purify my corrupt nature, a spirit of counsel in all difficulties, of direction in all doubts, of courage and resolution in all dangers, of constancy in all persecutions, of comfort in all troubles, of submission and resignation to thy holy will, in all afflictions that are most terrible to flesh and blood; more especially let him be powerfully present with me in times of sickness, and at the hour of death. Leave me not a moment to my own human frailty without his assistance, but let him continually inspire me with fear, love, and devotion towards thee; with truth, justice, and charity towards my neighbours; with abstinence and sobriety towards myself. Let him also, I beseech thee, be unto me a spirit of patience, in all crosses and provocations; of trust and steadfast repose of mind, in thy care and providence; of forgiveness to my enemies; of humility to make me easy and quiet, meek and gentle, and to keep me from the sin and torment of pride, envy, and ambition. Lastly, let him so rule and govern me, during my short abode here, that I may obtain everlasting life, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A prayer of intercession.

O Lord God, I adore thy majesty, reverence thy power, wisdom, and goodness. Thou art infinitely merciful, and hast commanded us to pray

pray for all men. Regard, I beseech thee, my petitions for all mankind. For his majesty king *George*, and all the royal family; for our bishops and clergy; for all who are in affliction of body or mind; for my friends, relations, and benefactors. Grant to them, and to me, and to all people, every grace and blessing that thou knowest to be necessary for us, with regard to this life and the next. O do thou bless and prosper, sanctify and preserve us. Remember not our offences, O Lord, but receive us to thy favour. Have mercy upon us, and forgive all our sins, thro' the merits of Jesus our Saviour. Hear not the voice of our heinous crimes, but look on the wounds of our Redeemer; and by his bitter death and passion, deliver us all from the miseries of eternal torments. O Lord, hear our prayers and forgive our sins, that our souls may not perish. Accept the tears of the penitent, and give grace to the wicked, that they may speedily return to thee. O God, thou knowest the frailty of human nature, and that, without thy merciful assistance, none of us can walk uprightly; grant us therefore such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and succour us in all temptations. O consider our weakness, and do not leave us; but regard us with an eye of tenderness and compassion. Supply the necessities of me and all men. Keep us all in thy fear and favour. Give us whatever is convenient for us, and most conducive to our present and future welfare, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A thanksgiving.

O All powerful God, who art the maker, preserver, governor, and kind benefactor of all things. It is my indispensable duty to praise, magnify, and give thee thanks. O God, I bless thee, for creating me with an immortal soul, for causing

me to be born of Christian parents, and for admitting me by baptism into the communion of thy church ; for all the helps and assistances of thy grace, to enable me in any measure to perform my duty ; for implanting in my mind an early fear of offending thee, and a great desire to please thee ; for whatever sin I have escaped, or any good I have done thro' the whole course of my life. I also praise thee, for all thy patience and forbearance towards me ; for sparing me so long, and giving me time to repent of my sins ; for the checks and restraints of thy good spirit, in keeping me from offending thee ; for all the means of grace and hopes of glory : But above all I magnify, bless, and adore thee, for sending thy son into the world, to die for the redemption of me and all mankind. I bless thee, O God, for all the temporal mercies which thou hast most bountifully bestowed upon me ; for that measure of health which I enjoy, for delivering me from many great calamities, with which others have been sorely visited. To thy goodness I owe it, that I have the use of my reason and senses ; that I am not languishing on a bed of sickness, nor groaning under the sharpest pains ; that I am not pining with want, nor forced to beg my daily bread ; but am competently provided for, and see many comforts round about me ; from thee alone it is, that my affairs do in any measure prosper ; it is thy wisdom that directs me, thy truth that instructs me, and thy power that at all times preserves me. And now, O Lord, what returns shall a poor sinner make for all these marvellous instances of thy mercy and goodness. O let my tongue be daily sounding forth thy praises ! and grant that I may manifest the sincerity of my thankfulness, by walking before thee in all godliness and honesty ; by serving thee faithfully, and making a right use of all thy blessings ;

sings; and by studying to please thee in all things; this I beg thro' Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

A morning or evening prayer, for a person in private.

O Lord, perfect in wisdom, goodness, and power, I thy creature and servant, prostrate myself before thee, in the deepest sense of my own unworthiness, and of thy incomprehensible perfections. I acknowledge the glories of thy nature, and thy transcendent goodness to me and all thy creatures; whom thou hast endowed with faculties capable of attaining eternal happiness, and of enjoying thee the highest good. But, O Lord, I confess that I have not lived as becomes a reasonable creature, who professes to know and believe in such a God and Saviour. For innumerable have been my failings, omissions, and neglects, in performing my duty and improving in virtue. My offences against thy divine majesty in thought, word, and deed, are many and great: And shouldst thou be extreme to mark and punish what I have done amiss, I could not hope for the least of thy favour. But, O Lord, the goodness of thy nature, revealed in thy Son's gospel, encourages me to implore thee for mercy and forgiveness. In his name, and for his sake, I beseech thee to pardon and forgive all my offences and transgressions. This I beg, sincerely resolving to endeavour after a greater degree of perfection, by a more constant obedience to thy will, by which I can only hope for thy favour here, and eternal life hereafter.

And because such is the infirmity of my nature, that without thy grace, I cannot keep myself free from sin, grant me therefore, such aid and assistance of thy Holy Spirit, as may fortify me against all temptations, and make me faithful and diligent
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in thy service. Enable me rightly to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; and to live suitably to that light and knowledge which thou affordeſt. O let me be a true Chriſtian, a ſound believer, and a ſincere penitent. Help and aſſiſt me in the performance of all my duty, that by my future conduct, I may better answer the end of our moſt holy religion, and adorn the goſpel I profeſs to believe. Direct my undertakings, proſper my honeſt endeavours, rule my heart in thy fear and love. Let the experience of thy repeated mercies engage me to make ſuitable returns for them. Let the aſſured hope of future glory, raiſe my mind above the ſordid views of this world. Let the conſideration of thine infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, teach me contentedly to ſubmit to all the diſpenſations of thy providence. Let the life of my bleſſed Saviour be an example to me how to behave in every ſtate and inſtance of duty. Let my hopes and affections be immoveably fixed on thoſe rewards, which are promiſed to all who faithfully ſerve thee. Let the conſideration of thy omnipreſence, ſo influence and govern all my thoughts, words, and actions, as that I may daily increaſe in virtue and piety. I likewise pray for the welfare and happineſs of all mankind, that all may know, worſhip, and obey thee, as becomes the goſpel of Chriſt, in its native ſimplicity. Lead all profeſſed Chriſtians to truth, righteouſneſs, and peace; that they may adorn the religion they profeſs. Put an end to idolatry and ſuperſtition, to ſpiritual tyranny and oppreſſion. Refrain that ſpirit of pride and ambition, which diſturbs the world; and compoſe all unchriſtian animoſities. Regard with mercy this kingdom. Cure our evil tempers, conquer our uncharitable diſpoſitions, and grant that mutual love and charity may flouriſh and abound amongſt us.

Pour

Pour down thy blessings spiritual and temporal upon our king and all the royal family. Grant, that all in authority may faithfully discharge the great trust reposed in them. Let the thoughts of the day of judgment engage all mankind conscientiously to perform their several duties, with due care and fidelity. Extend thy mercy and compassion to all afflicted persons, to all who are in any state of uneasiness or pain, whether of mind or body. I truly sympathize with them, and earnestly pray, that thou in thy providence, wilt afford them all such supports and assistances, as are suitable to their several necessities, and in thy good time to deliver them out of all their calamities. Bless and shower down thy mercies on all my relations, friends, and benefactors; grant them and me, whatever is truly necessary and good for us, in this world; but above all, I intreat thee so to direct and govern us, that we may attain everlasting salvation.

Accept also, I pray thee, of my humble acknowledgments of the perfections of thy nature, and of thy wonderful goodness to the children of men. I adore and celebrate the unalterable glories of thy power, adorned and directed by unerring wisdom and goodness. I bless and praise thee, for every instance of thy tender regard to me, and to all thy creatures. I humbly thank thee, for making me capable of knowing and imitating thee, and of enjoying thy favour. I bless thee for calling me to the knowledge of the Christian religion, for that sense I have of the excellence and importance of virtue and piety, and for the many peculiar instances of thy merciful care and goodness towards me. I praise thy holy name, for all thy Son Jesus Christ did, taught, and suffered in this world, to redeem mankind from the power and punishment of their sins; and to give them the reasonable hope, of being immortally happy hereafter. I also thank thee for those many instances of thy mercy, by which
this

this short and uncertain life, is rendered much happier than it could have been otherwise ; for affording me the necessary supports, and many of the [most desirable] conveniencies of such a state, and for thy preservation of me, from many accidents and dangers. O Lord, continue I beseech thee, these thy temporal favours, if consistent with my eternal good ; if not, bring me as thou pleasest to life everlasting. I resign myself and all my concerns to thee, in hopes thou wilt be my guide and governor unto death. Let the sense of all thy mercies inspire me with such gratitude and love to thee, as may express itself in a holy life, and in keeping all thy commandments. Assist me by all the methods of thy wisdom and goodness, to perfect my mind in whatever is truly excellent ; and to work out my salvation in the way most agreeable to thy holy will, and to the obligations of a reasonable creature. Finally, O Lord, pardon all my past sins, guide and govern me by thy Holy Spirit, in my sincere endeavours to attain everlasting life. Promote my true happiness as thou seest fit ; and mercifully accept my imperfect services, according to thy goodness declared by thy beloved Son our blessed Saviour. *Amen.*

A family prayer for morning or evening.

ALMIGHTY and most gracious God, the maker and governor of all creatures in heaven and earth. We thy poor servants, encouraged by thy mercy and goodness, and from a deep sense of our guilt and wretchedness, do humble ourselves before thy divine majesty ; beseeching thee to have mercy upon us, and thro' the meritorious death and passion of thy dear Son, whom thou hast given for our redemption, to pardon our innumerable sins and offences, which we are guilty of in thought,
word

word and deed ; and whereby we have deserved to be punished with everlasting destruction.

O Lord, we confess, that tho' as thy creatures, thy servants, and thy children, thou hast laid upon us the greatest obligations to obedience, yet have we wandered and gone astray, from thy holy just and good laws ; we have eagerly pursued the sinful pleasures and vanities of this world ; we have followed the imaginations of our own foolish and wicked hearts ; as if there was no God to be served, no soul to be saved, no hell to be feared, no heaven to be expected. And yet so many and undeserved have been thy mercies towards us, so kind and unwearied the expressions of thy bounty, that our disobedience and ingratitude is become the more exceeding sinful ; so that we cannot without sorrow of heart and confusion of face, reflect upon our thus offending thee with our sins, when thou hast been multiplying thy benefits upon us. But we beseech thee, O most merciful Father, in thy tenderest compassions to look down upon us, and for thy name sake, O Lord hear, O Lord spare, O Lord forgive, all our manifold sins and offences : and by a serious and hearty repentance, and a true and lively faith in thy Son, make us fit to partake of this thy pardoning mercy.

And because we are not of ourselves sufficient to avoid any sin, or perform any good, without the grace of thy holy spirit, we therefore beseech thee, to preserve us from all temptations to sin, and to assist us in all parts of our duty. To this end, subdue and mortify in us all evil inclinations ; make us wise to salvation ; perfect in us every good word and work, that we may always do what is pleasing in thy sight, and be found of thee, without spot and blameless, when we are called hence, and shall be no more seen. Let the strict and solemn account that we must shortly make, be often in our most
serious

serious thoughts, and so influence our lives and conversation, that the apprehension of death, or judgment may not be a terror to us ; but grant us thy grace, that we may with such care and diligence, obey the laws of our Lord and Saviour, and so follow the steps of his holy example, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we may rise from death, with joy and gladness, and appear with him in glory.

And, O Lord, we beg leave to praise thy divine majesty, for the many mercies and blessings we do enjoy ; for our life and being, for our food and raiment, and for all those other comforts and necessities which thou art pleased to confer upon us ; in particular, for preserving and defending us from all evil accidents and dangers. But above all we magnify and adore thee, for that wonderful instance of thy exceeding love to us and all mankind, in sending thy Son to die for us, that we might obtain eternal life. O Lord, we can never sufficiently praise thee for this thy infinite goodness towards us ; but do thou be pleased to accept of our best acknowledgments and most hearty thanks, for this thy wonderful love and mercy.

And we pray thee, O God, to be gracious and merciful to these nations, to pardon and forgive our innumerable sins and offences ; continue thy blessings to us, our peace and our plenty, and above all, the truth and purity of thy gospel ; and avert from us the judgments we have deserved. Bless our king, and all the royal family ; grant that his government may tend to promote thy honour and glory, and the true happiness of all his people. Comfort the afflicted, whether in mind, body, or estate. O God be thou to them a present help in time of trouble, and mercifully deliver them out of all their miseries and distresses. Bless and preserve all our friends and relations ; forgive and
turn

turn the hearts of all who bear us ill will, or have injured us in word or deed.

We beg leave to commit ourselves to thy mercy and protection, defend us from all dangers and sad accidents. Grant us health and strength faithfully to serve thee all our days; that when we depart hence we may receive the end of our faith, and of all our labours, even the eternal salvation of our souls, thro' the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord.

A concluding prayer, to be added to either of the former.

O Lord, we most earnestly beseech thee, to hear and answer the petitions we have offered up for mercy and grace. Let our praises and thanksgivings which are the homage due to thy perfections and goodness, be acceptable to thee; and reject not the intercessions we have made in behalf of our fellow creatures. Take us we pray thee, into thy powerful and wise protection. Defend us from all accidents and dangers this day (night,) and from the designs of evil men, and every thing terrible and hurtful; all which we beg thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose words we farther pray for whatever is necessary both for ourselves and others.

Our Father, &c.

A prayer for a sick person.

O Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need, we humbly implore thy mercy towards this thy sick servant, lying under thy hand, in great weakness of body. Visit him, O Lord, with thy salvation; and deliver him from that bodily pain and sickness with which he is afflicted. Bless the means that are made
use

use of for *his* recovery. And if it be agreeable to thy divine will, prolong *his* days upon earth, that *he* may live to thee, and be an instrument of thy glory ; by serving thee faithfully, and doing good in *his* generations. Grant, O Lord, that *he* may take *his* sickness patiently, and entirely submit to thy blessed will in all things. Sanctify this thy fatherly correction to *him*, that the sense of *his* weakness may encrease *his* faith, and perfect *his* repentance. Give *him* comfort and sure confidence in thee, defend *him* from death, and the suggestions of Satan, and keep *him* in continual peace and safety, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Thanksgiving for recovery.

O Almighty God and merciful Father, we desire to bless and praise thy holy name, in behalf of thy servant, whom thou hast been graciously pleased to raise from the bed of sickness, and restore in a great measure to *his* health again ; praised be thy name for thy merciful goodness towards *him*. And grant, O God, that the remembrance of thy late mercies to *him*, may so affect *his* mind, that *he* may dedicate the remainder of *his* life, to the service of that God, who hath dealt so bountifully with *him*. Strengthen and confirm all good resolutions in *him*, and enable *him* to serve thee the rest of *his* days, in all holiness and purity of living, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, *Amen.*

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